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Vol. II.

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Jack Harkaway and the Black Band.



Digging his heels down, he tried to stop himself. It was too late. The ice gave way beneath him with a crash, and he was plunged into the deep water, which eagerly clasped him in its freezing embrace. Down he sank many feet.

CHAPTER I. THE CHALLENGE.

HARKAWAY had been accustomed to some wild scenes during his life, but the confusion that reigned in his room baffled all his experience. Half a dozen men were standing on chairs, making speeches one against the other. Others singing songs and joining in choruses. Others again were doing their little worst to Jack's property. It seemed to be their object to destroy everything they could lay their hands on. One was making

cigarettes by tearing leaves out of his "Livy." Another was cutting strips of cloth out of his dressing-gown and putting them over the chimney of the lamp to burn. A third had the poker red-hot in the fire, and now and again burning holes in the carpet. A fourth was breaking all the crockery in the cup-board with the tongs. The man laughed idiotically at each smash.

"I say, Carden," exclaimed Jack, "I can't stand this."

"It's rather neat, isn't it?" said Carden.
"Help me to clear the room, will you?"

"Very well. How shall we begin?" said Carden.
"Chuck them out, one by one."

"All right. Pitch in. I'll start with the poker cove."

"You'll want a new carpet to-morrow."

"Bother the carpet," said Jack, seizing a man who was boring a hole in the cushion of a chair with a fruit knife.

He soon dragged him to the door and deposited him on the landing. Then he went back for another. He passed Carden on the way, who carried two—one in each hand.

The men were too far gone to show fight, and took their expulsion very quietly.

In about ten minutes the room was cleared.

The oak was sported.

Jack looked round dismally on the scene of devastation.

Ruined furniture, broken mirrors, cracked glasses, smashed crockery met his gaze everywhere.

The men outside began to kick at the door, and began to vociferate loudly.

"Kick away, you beauties, you don't come in here," said Carden, with a quiet smile.

"No; I'm jiggered if they do," said Jack.

"What do you think of your first wine?"

"Not much, I can tell you. My first shall be my last," said Jack.

"St. Aldate's is coming to something," remarked Carden. "We have the reputation of being the fastest college in Oxford, and by Jove, we are trying to deserve our designation."

"Haven't they made a clean sweep of it, that's all?"

"Rather. I never saw such havoc. It's awful," said Carden, adding, "Where did you get your stuff from?"

"My wine? Oh, it's some of the most expensive I could buy."

"That is it. Youngsters' nuts are not up to swell wines, and the result of your extravagance is a smash up. Hark at the beggars. What a row they are making."

"Can't we duck them or something?"

"Let's try. I'll open the oak while you send a pail of water over them."

"Suppose they storm the castle and get in again?"

"They shan't do that," said Carden. "I'll guard the door."

Jack saw a large pail of dirty water, left by the scout, after washing up some things.

Seizing it in his vigorous grasp, and getting his hand well under the bottom, he followed Carden.

The door was opened and as quickly shut.

But, short as had been the interval, Jack had discharged the contents of the pail full in the face of a mob of howling men.

There was a rush backwards.

Then a renewed attack on the solid oak.

This was accompanied with naughty words and a fierce yelling.

"Fire away," said Jack, adding:

"Make yourself at home, old fellow, if you can. Shall you pitch here to-night? Better, perhaps, take the sofa; unless you prefer half my bed."

"No thanks; the sofa will do for me, I can't stand sleeping double," said Carden. "It goes against the grain."

"All right. Will you have the bed? and I'll take the rug."

"Don't put yourself out on my account. Give me a blanket, and I shall be as jolly as a sandboy in less than no time."

Jack speedily rugged him up on the sofa, and by degrees the noisy men outside dispersed, retiring to their rooms.

In a short time both Harkaway and Carden were asleep.

They did not turn up at chapel in the morning.

That was no unusual occurrence with the fast set.

Monday and Buster groaned when they entered the room and saw the havoc that had been done.

The scout was used to that sort of thing.

He had seen what we may call several generations of university men.

As a rule, young men at Oxford are very much alike.

What is done in one man's time is done in another's.

So Buster set to work like a philosopher to put things straight.

He emptied the wine out of the boots and the clock, cleared away the remains of the orgie, turned the carpet, so that the burnt holes would not be seen, put the injured chairs in the background, and in a couple of hours the room looked as if nothing extraordinary had happened.

At ten o'clock a very decent breakfast stood on the table, consisting of cold game, hot fish, Strasbourg patties, honey in the comb, tea and coffee, with other trifles.

Then he found some soda and brandy, which he gave first to Carden, who drank it eagerly.

"Did it hiss as it went down, Buster?" asked Carden.

"Didn't hear it, sir," said the scout.

"Is Mr. Harkaway up?"

"Not yet, sir. Soon make him show a leg."

He went as he spoke with some more soda and brandy to his master, who speedily turned out of bed.

"Here, you Monday, Tuesday," cried Tom Carden, "bring me some soap and water, towels, etc. I suppose you haven't got a spare tub?"

"Only one, sare, and Mist' Harkaway him in it," replied Monday. "Hark how um splash about, sare."

"In fact, Jack was in his bath, making a noise like a sportive porpoise."

Carden soon dressed himself, and was joined by Jack at the breakfast table.

The London papers had just arrived, and were laid out on the table.

Everything was in excellent order.

"Wonderful man, Buster," exclaimed Jack. "He's cleared the wreck away in a marvelous manner."

"He's used to it. Aren't you, old villain?" asked Carden.

"Ought to be by this time, sir," said Buster. "I've seen a few things in my time. Spent almost all my life in the 'varsity, but this here spree last night was a lick. Pate, sir?—yes, sir; all the way from Strasbourg, sir. Made of geese's livers, sir, they do say, and werry nice, too."

"What do you know about it, you vagabond? Shut up."

"Cert'ny, sir. Don't presume to know more than you, sir."

"You old humbug, why, I'll bet that, in your wicked old heart, you are saying to yourself that you have forgotten twenty years ago more than I have ever known."

"Yes, sir, wouldn't like to contradict a gentleman like you, sir. 'Scuse me, sir, knock at the door."

"Answer it then, and keep your confounded tongue quiet. You know I hate you."

The scout went to the door, and came back saying:

"Mr. Kemp, sir."

"Kemp?" repeated Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"Say I won't see him."

"He says he's come from Lord Tollington, sir."

"Tollington?" repeated Jack, adding to Carden, "wasn't he at my wine last night?"

"Of course he was. Don't you remember what happened?"

"Not much. I was so upset with the attack on Manasses, and the riot afterwards, I am rather fogged."

"You punched his head, or something."

"Oh, yes, I recollect now. Ask Mr. Kemp to be good enough to step in," said Jack.

Kemp entered, looking round him defiantly.

"Do you want me?" asked Jack.

"I suppose so, or I should not have called," replied Kemp.

"You needn't be insolent my good fellow, or you will get out a deuced sight quicker than you came in."

"That depends upon circumstances. I wasn't drunk last night."

"Do you mean to say I was?" asked Jack.

"Draw what inference you like from my words. I come from Lord Tollington."

"What of that?"

"You will know directly, if you will listen."

"Go ahead," said Jack.

"You insulted his lordship grossly last night and struck him."

"Very possible. I am rather hazy about the affair, but if I did hit him, I'll lay six to four he deserved it."

"That is not the question. Lord Tollington has sent me to demand satisfaction."

"What?" exclaimed Jack.

"Satisfaction."

"Do you mean that he wants to fight a duel with me?"

"I do," answered Kemp.

"But dueling is illegal in this country."

"He is willing to chance that."

"Is he?" said Jack, thoughtfully.

"If you will not accept the challenge he has sent you by me, he says he will publicly horsewhip you, and brand you as a coward all over Oxford."

"Indeed!"

"You may sneer, but you would not like to have bills printed and posted everywhere advertising your cowardice," said Kemp.

"Perhaps you would post them?"

"I certainly should have no objection," replied Kemp coolly.

Jack stared at him in a puzzled sort of manner. At length he said:

"I am at breakfast now; would you have any objection to come back again in an hour?"

"Not at all. I will do so with pleasure."

"I will have you an answer then."

"All right. I am simply the friend of Lord Tollington, and have no wish to be disagreeable," said Kemp.

"Open the door for this gentleman," said Jack.

CHAPTER II.

NEGOTIATIONS.

"Humm's a pretty go," said Jack.

"Well, what of it," replied Carden.

"Fellows go and kick up a row in my room, want to beat a poor old Jew. I punch one man's head, and I get a challenge to fight a duel."

"It isn't pleasant certainly."

"Not at all."

"Shall you fight?"

"That's exactly what I want to ask you," replied Jack. "You have been up here longer than I, and you ought to know the manners and customs of the place and be able to advise me what to do."

"I must confess," said Carden, "that I never heard of men fighting duels. Oh! yes, I did, though; a man shot another years ago and bolted to Spain. Tollington is a very proud fellow; he belongs to one of the oldest families in the kingdom. Catholics, I think they are, and he evidently means fighting." The law will take your side. It is an offense to send a challenge; the police will have him up in no time.

"Can't stand police cases," said Jack, "they are low."

"Now I think of it, Tollington is reckoned a dead shot."

"Is he? I'm not a bad hand with a gun, but a pistol is a different thing."

"Tell you what I saw him do for a wager once," continued Carden. "He stuck a nine of diamonds on the wall, and at twenty paces he hit each pip in succession."

"That's not bad; I'm in for it," replied Jack.

"Can you fence?" asked his friend.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Pretty well. I know the passes, and can lunge in fierce or quarte, and all that sort of thing. They used to say I made rather pretty play with a sword," replied Jack.

"That's your sort then," cried Carden, gleefully.

"Tollington is not much of a fencer; I heard him say so once."

"But suppose his lordship chooses pistols?"

"He hasn't the choice, according to all usage. You, as the challenged, may select your own weapon, provided it is something of a civilized nature."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack; "that will do. I shan't be made cold meat of this time."

"Leave it all to me. I will do the needful with you, and talk to Kemp."

"Will you be my second?"

"Of course I will; didn't I say so? I'll get the swords and everything, a couple of Toledos—beauties, I know where to spot just the pair of irons you will want."

"I shall be indebted to you all my life if you will manage the affair for me. As he has challenged me, I must fight, and I'm glad it is not with pistols, because there is less chance of killing one another with swords."

"So I think. Keep yourself quiet, and refer Kemp to me when he returns. I'll talk to him like a Dutch uncle," said Carden.

"Thanks, old boy; I shan't forget you."

"You'll pink this fighting sprig of nobility, and take some of the courage out of him."

As he spoke, Monday again ushered in Kemp.

"Am I too soon?" he asked.

"Not at all," replied Jack.

"Oh, I thought you looked as if you couldn't make your mind up whether to be shot or kicked," said Kemp, insolently.

"This language to me in my own rooms is unpardonable, Mr. Kemp," cried Jack; "and were you not a messenger from Lord Tollington, I should turn you out."

"An easy way of getting out of a difficulty," sneered Kemp.

"As it is," said Jack, advancing threateningly towards Kemp, "I shall request Lord Tollington to send me a gentleman next time, not a swindler."

To Jack's taunt Kemp replied:

"Thank you. You can have another duel on with me if Tollington doesn't settle you."

"I wouldn't go out with you."

"Really, gentlemen," exclaimed Carden, "I must interpose between you. Harkaway, you are wrong to take any notice of Mr. Kemp, and you, sir, have behaved in a scandalous manner, which I will take care is reported to your principal."

"Didn't mean anything," said Kemp, abashed at this reproof. "Mr. Harkaway never loses an opportunity of snacking at me."

"Be good enough to confine yourself to the business in hand."

"I suppose that's soon settled. You don't mean fighting. It's against the law, and so on. I'd better go on to the saddler's, and order Tollington a new whip."

"By Jove! Carden," he cried, "this is more than I can stand. This fellow wants me to hit him."

Carden got between Jack and Kemp, keeping them apart.

"Do you refer, Mr. Kemp, to me in this affair?" he said.

"I do."

"Then oblige me by sitting down while we negotiate."

Jack sat down in his chair again, lit his pipe and smoked sullenly, while he glared savagely at Kemp, as if he would have liked to have half an hour's pounding at him.

"Now, Mr. Kemp," continued Carden, "I have the pleasure of informing you that Mr. Harkaway has accepted Lord Tollington's challenge."

"Really!" said Kemp, evidently surprised.

"Perhaps both of you thought he would not listen to such a proposal. You are mistaken if that was your belief."

"Pistols, I suppose?"

"On the contrary I we have decided upon swords."

"But Tollington particularly wishes to use hair triggers," said Kemp.

"I cannot control his lordship's inclinations," answered Carden, blandly. "I presume, however, that you are aware the choice of weapons lies with my friend, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Why?"

"Because he is the party challenged."

"Very well; I suppose it is all right. Forge ahead."

"The place must be settled between you and me, as well as the time, etc."

"What do you propose?" said Kemp, who appeared considerably crestfallen at the turn of affairs were taken.

"Place, a hayfield a mile or so out of Sanford on the high road; there is a slack near the gate. Do you know it?"

"Yes, that will do."

"Time, six o'clock to-morrow morning," continued Carden.

"Very well," said Kemp.

"I will bring weapons, or you may do so. The swords, remember, must be measured, and be of equal length."

"Do you think I would give Tollington a longer sword than Harkaway?" said Kemp, with assumed indignation.

"I don't say anything of the kind, but mistakes are possible, and I mean to guard against them," replied Carden, adding, "is there any further matter that we can debate?"

"No; it's all settled."

"Keep it dark then. We don't want half Oxford looking on. Better bring a doctor with you though."

"What for? You haven't killed my man already."

"No; but we mean to have a try for it," said Carden.

"Besides, a doctor is useful to both parties. Will you bring one, or shall we?"

"We will," answered Kemp.

"That will do. As we shall not utter a word to a human being, we shall know that if spectators are present, or the police interfere, that it is from your side the information has come; understand that, if you please, Mr. Kemp."

"We mean fighting quite as much as you do," answered Kemp; "so you needn't flurry your fat about us splitting."

"Good-morning. Monday, open the door for this gentleman."

When Kemp was gone, Jack exclaimed:

"I can breathe again, now that vulgar brute is out of the room."

"So can I. Open the window; let us purify."

"Isn't it odd that when there is anything unpleasant going on with regard to myself, that fellow Kemp is sure to have a finger in the pie?"

"It is. He manages to get hold of one fellow after another. I heard he was working Lord Tollington, who is a freshman, and getting money out of him at billiards and by betting."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Jack, "if he put Tollington up to the idea of a duel."

"Very likely. Now look here, old man. I'll go and get the fencing irons, and we'll have a bout together. You must keep quiet. No excitement to-day, mind," said Carden.

"All right," answered Jack. "I don't want to kill my opponent, but I should like to give him a lesson."

"If you do kill him by an unlucky thrust, you will have to bolt abroad."

"Shall I?"

"Undoubtedly. Dueling is illegal. If a man kill another in a duel, the law says it is murder, and you will either be hanged or imprisoned for life."

"Nice prospect, that," replied Jack, with a sickly smile. "I begin to think I am in for a good thing."

"Deuced nasty uncomfortable thing; but you must pull through it somehow."

"I'm not finking," Jack replied. "Only an affair of this sort makes one rather solemn."

He went for the swords, and returned in about half an hour with two beauties, light, delicate, well-tempered, and elastic as whalebone.

They immediately had a set-to, and Tom Carden expressed himself satisfied when, at the expiration of an hour, they left off.

"I learnt fencing when I was at Eton under Angelo, the best man in England," he answered.

"You fence well," said Jack, "and no mistake."

"Yes. I was considered a good hand at it. I won the foils in my year."

"I must really thank you for putting me up to several wrinkles," continued Jack. "That feint of yours in tierce, and the lunge afterwards is splendid."

"Generally so considered. It lays your adversary open to you; and if you watch your opportunity, you cannot help splitting him through the right arm, near the shoulder-blade."

"In Germany, I believe the students always settle their disputes with the sword."

"Yes, but they only hit in the face. It is not fair to strike anywhere else, and that accounts for the hideous scars so many Germans have on their faces."

"Well," said Jack, "I look forward with the hope to the future. Shall I make my will?"

"You've got nothing to leave, have you?"

"Not till the governor croaks. Oh, yes, there is the monkey," replied Jack, with a laugh.

"Let him take his chance. He's all safe with Mole."

"There is just this little portrait of Emily," said Jack; "the one in my locket. If anything should happen, give it to her, will you?"

"You are miles off being what doctors and undertakers call a stiff un," replied Carden. "But I'll think of it if"—

He did not conclude the sentence.

Jack's life was in the hands of a merciful Providence. Everything depended on the morrow on a cool head and a steady hand.

He did not wish to frighten him.

CHAPTER III.

THE DUEL.

AFTER hall, Jack went out to take a constitutional.

While he was gone for his walk, Harvey came to Carden's rooms, and found him indulging in black coffee and brandy, smoking a very big cigar, and lolling lazily on a sofa.

"How do, Carden?" said Harvey. "Seen anything of Jack?"

"Yes; he's gone for a stroll."

"Oh, I wondered where he was. Monday said he had not been in since hall, and couldn't make out where he had got to."

"Do you want him?"

"Well, yes, I do."

"Anything important?"

"To him it is."

"Well, then, postpone it till to-morrow morning to oblige me."

"Why?" asked Harvey.

"I have my reasons."

"Can't you tell a fellow?"

"No, not now. You will know all at breakfast time to-morrow morning; but what is the news?"

"Well, as you are so uncommunicative I don't see why I should open my mouth any more than you."

"You are Harkaway's friend, are you not?"

"I hope so. We were schoolfellows together, and I don't suppose it is any secret that if it had not been for Jack's kindness I should not be up at Oxford now."

"Very well, then; you must not excite him to-night."

"It's all very well to puzzle a man by talking in this enigmatical manner," remarked Harvey, peevishly.

"Can't you tell us what's on?"

"Can't you tell me? The thing cuts both ways."

"I won't speak unless you do."

"If you'll speak first, I'll enlighten you afterwards."

Will that do, exacting beast?" replied Carden.

"All right. A servant has been over here from Oakley Wood."

"Where is that?"

"Oh, a few miles out of Oxford."

"Who lives there? I am in the dark."

"I thought you knew," said Harvey. "It is Mr. Traver's place, and Emily is governess there."

"Who is Emily?"

"Why, Jack's young lady. You call yourself a friend of Harkaway's, and you haven't heard of her."

"Perhaps I have. I may have forgotten; anyhow, I don't remember."

"Emily and Jack were engaged a long time ago, before we got wrecked in the China seas; he saved her from a lot of perils; her people are dead, and she has gone out as a governess rather than be dependent on Jack's people. Now do you see?"

"Jetwigger—that is to say, I twig," said Carden.

"Well, Emily has suddenly disappeared, and no one knows where she has gone to."

"Der teuffel," exclaimed Carden, who seemed in the humor of making experiments in foreign language.

"What may that mean in English?"

Carden pointed to the floor with his finger.

"Gentleman down stairs. Name begins with D and ends with L. We never mention him in polite society."

"Oh, I know, the d— Call him Satan; it sounds better," said Harvey.

"These disappearances are becoming the rage," said Carden. "First of all Miss Hilda Manasses vanishes from the festive scene, then the gentle Emily is *non est*. It is a case for the police."

"Won't Jack be upset, that's all."

"I should think so."

"He'll rave and tear like a mad bull."

"Enough to make him, and that is just why I don't want the news to reach him till to-morrow. Who besides you saw the messenger from Oakley Wood?"

"No one."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, Monday ushered the servant in while I was sitting in Jack's rooms, but he did not hear a word that passed. Mrs. Travers wished to inquire if Miss Emily had been to Oxford to see Mr. Harkaway, as she knew they were engaged, and Emily had been missing since breakfast time."

"I see. It's all right. Not a syllable of this must reach Harkaway's ears."

"Why?"

"He is going to fight a duel with swords to-morrow morning."

Harvey jumped out of his chair in amazement.

"Now you're joking," he exclaimed.

"Am I? I'll take my oath I was never more serious in my life."

"Who with?"

"Lord Tollington."

"Oh, I heard something about him slipping into Tollington. So they are going to fight, eh?"

"Tollington challenged him."

"Why didn't you stop it?"

"Simply because I could not do so. His lordship said he would publicly insult him if he did not accept the challenge. Fighting with swords is not always fatal, and I thought that it was best to let it come off."

"Jack can fence a little," said Harvey, thoughtfully.

"A good deal, you mean; he's all there at it. Now you see why I don't want him upset."

"Of course. Are you his second?"

"I have that distinguished honor."

"I wonder he did not come to me," said Harvey, a little hurt. "But I'm pleased to think he is in good hands."

"The fact is the whole thing was unexpected. I was sitting in Harkaway's rooms when Kemp brought in the challenge, and he asked me to manage it for him."

"So Kemp's in it?"

"Yes."

"Then they have got it up for Harkaway between them; they'll do him some injury before they have done with him. I never saw such determined enemies as he has got."

"There shall be nothing unfair on this occasion," answered Carden. "I promise you I will see him safely through it."

"Can I come?"

"No; I am sorry to say that we have pledged ourselves to have no one on the ground but the principals, seconds, and the doctor."

"If I can't, I can't," said Harvey; "but I should like to see it all. If Tollington hurts Jack, I'll fight him myself."

"So you shall," replied Carden; "but I hope it will be the other way."

Harvey stayed a little longer in Carden's room, but did not attempt to see Jack that evening.

Fighting a duel is a very serious matter.

The intelligence he had to communicate would have unnerved Harkaway and given his opponent an advantage over him.

Therefore, he felt persuaded that Carden was right in asking him to postpone the delivery of the news until the following day.

The night passed anxiously for all concerned.

Jack woke up more than once, having had bad dreams, but at half-past four, when his second, who had not attempted to sleep, came to his bedside, he sprang up eagerly.

"Is it time to make a start?" he said.

"Yes; we have some distance to drive."

"Where is the trap?"

"At the stable. It will be ready at five sharp. How do you feel?"

"Fresh as paint," answered Jack. "Stand on one side while I roll into my tub."

Carden got out of the way, and Jack plunged into the invigorating water, sponging himself and splashing about sportively.

In ten minutes he was dressed.

It was a lovely May morning.

The sun had just risen as they reached the stable, and the air was warm and genial.

They found the dog-cart waiting them, got in—Carden handling the "ribbons," as he playfully called the reins—and they were soon spanking along the Ifley road.

"I was half afraid you wouldn't wake," remarked Jack.

"No more I did."

"Some one called you, then?"

"Wrong again. I did not go to sleep. There was a Van John party going on in Seymour's rooms, so I toddled over, won a five, and left them at it."

"By Jove! Your nerves must be strong."

"I hope so. If they were not they would not be of much use to me," answered Carden, with a smile.

As they went along, Tom gave his companion a few words of final instruction and encouragement.

"You are both of you young and full of wind," he said, "so the chances are Tollington will last as long as you. It's no use trying to hit hard with a sword, as if you were playing at single-stick. Rely upon skill, and remember all I have told you."

Jack said he would do his best.

When they reached the field, Carden alighted from the trap, opened a gate, led the horse in, pulled him some way out of the rack, and left him standing in a sheltered place, free from observation.

"We are first on the ground," he observed.

Scarcely had he spoken, before the sound of wheels was heard.

A glance sufficed to show that it held Kemp, Lord Tollington, and a little man dressed in black, who, from a case of instruments he carried under his arm, it was fair to suppose was the doctor.

"Got a saw-bones," muttered Jack.

Carden and Kemp bowed to each other.

Lord Tollington was smoking a cigar with the utmost nonchalance.

He chatted gayly with the doctor, as if nothing unusual was about to happen.

"Where are your swords?" asked Kemp.

"Here," replied Carden, producing his case.

Kemp examined them carefully, and was satisfied with his inspection.

"They will do," he exclaimed. "By-the-by, may I say two words to Harkaway?"

"Certainly not," answered the other, suspiciously.

"I merely wanted to tell him something."

"Send any message you like through me."

"Well, then, tell him Emily has vanished no one knows where," said Kemp.

Carden felt a strong inclination to knock the villain down.

He felt instantly that this intelligence was intended to weaken and unnerve Harkaway at the last moment.

Putting on a careless air, he replied:

"Oh, that is stale news. We heard that last night."

"Did you?" said Kemp, looking at him inquiringly.

"That's all I wanted to say. Is your man ready?"

"He will be in two minutes. See after your principal."

"Does the first wound stop the fight?" said Carden.

"Yes, the first serious wound; but not a mere scratch."

"Of course not; that is understood."

Going over to Harkaway, Tom Carden exclaimed:

"Strip, old fellow, and take your sword."

Jack quickly took off his coat, waistcoat and braces.

He stood there in his trousers and shirt.

Round his waist he tied a belt, sailor fashion.

His shoes were very light and elastic.

Taking his sword in hand, he walked to the open spot indicated.

"I think, Mr. Kemp," observed Carden, "that if we place our men north and south, neither will have the advantage of the rising sun."

"No; I think not," replied Kemp.

Lord Tollington and Harkaway faced one another.

"Will the man apologize?" inquired his lordship of Kemp, looking round in a supercilious manner.

Kemp repeated the question to Carden, who answered:

"If his lordship will express his regret for his extraordinary conduct, which led to Mr. Harkaway's chastizing him, probably Mr. Harkaway will admit his sorrow at having inflicted bodily pain upon Lord Tollington."

"That is absurd. *En garde*, sir," replied his lordship, saluting.

The swords clashed in the salute. Then each combatant stepped back; each one's eyes fixed upon the other's; every muscle rigid as iron, each face determined and resolute.

In form Tollington was about Jack's height, and bore some resemblance to him, though the latter was more stoutly built.

The birds sang merrily in the trees and hedgerows; the kine lowed in the meadows, and a gentle breeze wafted the perfume of the hay towards the collegians.

Much as Jack had profited by Carden's instructions, they did not seem to avail him much.

If he tried a feint, Lord Tollington was prepared for him.

If he made a desperate and clever thrust, his lordship parried it.

The fact was that Tollington had also been at Eton, and had learnt fencing from the same master who taught Carden; therefore they were both acquainted with the same tricks of fence.

For fully ten minutes they continued to fight without either obtaining a sensible advantage.

At the expiration of that time his lordship succeeded in slightly touching Jack in the breast.

The blood ran down his white shirt, and stained it crimson.

Jack became more wary.

He felt that he was not much hurt, and restraining his nervousness, he watched narrowly for an opportunity.

It came at last.

A whistle was heard in the hedgerow.

"Some one coming," exclaimed incautiously.

Lord Tollington did not pay any attention to this remark, but kept his eye fixed on his adversary.

Jack, by a dexterous turn of the wrist, inflicted a severe wound on his lordship.

The unhappy young nobleman fell to the ground with a groan, deluging the greensward with his blood, as Jack deftly withdrew his blade.

In an instant Kemp was supporting him.

The surgeon was also by his side, examining the wound, which he proceeded to bind up, to stop the hemorrhage.

"Eh, lad!" exclaimed a voice. "Be the Oxford gentlemen a-fighting wi' swords?"

Carden saw a country bumpkin eating some bread and bacon.

"Here's a half a crown for you," he said. "Go to your work, and hold your tongue."

"Hold my tongue for half a crown? That's not me. I mun ha' a suverin'," answered the bumpkin, with a knowing look.

"That's all you'll get from me," said Tom Carden giving him a hearty kick; "and now be off, unless you want another."

Bumpkin slunk away without another word.

After getting to a safe distance he stopped.

"Get of the 'aaf-crown?" he said.

"See you hanged first."

Jack had hastily put on his clothes, and going to the surgeon, inquired anxiously after his adversary.

"I hope sincerely he is not much hurt," he said.

"The wound is not mortal," said the doctor, "but he will have to lay up for some time. Fortunately, the part touched is fleshy, and no important vessels in the way."

"That is jolly," said Jack. "Can we render you any assistance?"

"None, thanks. We must get him back to college as soon as possible, and say he has a fever."

Jack shook the doctor by the hand, and rejoined Carden, who had already taken the dog-cart into the road.

"He's not fatally hurt," he exclaimed. "Hurrah!"

"I knew that by the way he was hit. Jump in. It's all right," said the imperturbable Carden.

Jack was soon by his side and rolling back to Oxford.

"I shall have an appetite for breakfast now," he observed.

"How about your wound? Did he let the daylight in?" asked Carden, whipping up the horse.

"Oh, no. It's merely a scratch. The bone stopped the point of the sword."

"Lucky for you. He fenced better than I expected."

"So I thought. It was my idea, at one time, that he was too good for me."

"You are well out of it, old fellow. I congratulate you."

"Thanks. It has ended better than I hoped," replied Jack.

"Do you remember what Hudibras says?" asked Carden.

"No; what?"

"Ah, me! what perils do environ—the man who meddles with cold iron."

Jack laughed.

"Well, it wasn't altogether my fault," he said, "and if fellows will fight, why, they must."

With this philosophical remark, he contented himself till they reached Oxford, where they arrived in time for chapel.

Jack did not attend very much to the service that morning.

His thoughts were diverted from religious exercise, and some excuse must be made for him when we consider the excitement he had passed through. Carden linked his arm in his as they left the chapel, and said:

"You will breakfast with me?"

"Thanks," replied Jack, "I don't want to trespass on your good-nature. You must be tired, as you have been up all night, on my account, too. I suppose you will shirk lectures and turn in?"

"No; I shall go to lectures, and sleep there if I feel tired. You must come with me because I have something to tell you."

"Touching what?"

"I shan't say a word till you've fed. Then you shall know my secret."

Totally ignorant of his meaning, and thinking that his friend was only joking with him, Jack went to breakfast, to which he did ploughman's justice.

"Now," said Carden, lighting a cigar, "we will proceed to revelations. Don't you smoke?"

"Yes; I shall put on a modest pipe," replied Jack, charging his well blacked meerschaum with Bristol bird's eye.

"Don't be alarmed at what I am going to tell you."

"That depends. What is it?"

"You are spoony on a little girl named Emily, at Oakley Wood."

"Mrs. Travers's place. She is governess there. What of her?" cried Jack, excitedly.

"She has been missing since yesterday morning."

"Who told you this?"

"Harvey. He saw a messenger last night from Oakley wood."

"Why did you not let me know at once? It was wrong of you, very wrong, indeed," said Jack.

"No, it was not, and I will tell you why. If you had

known it you would have been no good in the duel this morning, and got pinked instead of Tollington."

"It is very odd," said Jack, musingly. "First of all Hilda Manasses vanishes, and then Emily. Who can have done it?"

"I think Mr. Kemp knows more about it than he would like to tell."

"Why?"

"Because he wanted me to mention it to you just before the duel began."

"Did he? Then it's a plot of Davis's, I'll lay my life," exclaimed Jack, adding, "what is to be done?"

Jack threw down his pipe and groaned.

His enemies had touched him in a sore point when they had attacked his darling Emily.

They had tried to make her jealous through Hilda.

They had endeavored to keep him out of the boat in the 'variety race.'

Hunston had made an attempt on his life and they had striven hard to get Lord Tollington to kill him.

In all these attempts they had failed.

But at last they had inflicted a wound on his heart which would take a long time to heal.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPTIVE MAIDENS.

THE secret of the duel was well kept. Lord Tollington was reported to be suffering from an attack of low fever, not contagious, which in a few weeks would be cured.

The authorities of St. Aldates were far from suspecting that a desperate duel had been fought by two gentlemen in residence in the college.

Jack sent Monday every day to inquire after the health of his injured opponent, and once or twice ventured to make him presents of grapes and flowers.

These were invariably returned with a polite message by his lordship's scout.

In every way in his power Jack tried to find out what had become of Hilda and Emily, but without success.

The truth was that the Duke of Woodstock had employed Hunston to carry off the beautiful Jewess.

Frank Davis had given him a similar mission with regard to Emily.

Hunston had acquitted himself well of the double trust, and received handsome payment for his villainy.

The two maidens had been taken to a laborer's cottage a few miles out of Oxford.

The cottage was situated near the wood, and being built in a secluded spot, very few people passed near it.

For a good round sum, paid in advance, the laborer agreed to guard the girls.

He gave them the three rooms at the top of the house, undertaking that they could not escape.

His wife brought them their meals, and books were supplied them to beguile the monotony of their captivity.

At the bottom of the stairs an unusually fierce mastiff dog was chained, and he barked and tore at the chain when either of the prisoners appeared on the stairs.

The height of the windows from the ground rendered escape impossible in that direction.

Hilda had arrived at the cottage some hours before Emily, but agitated and alarmed as she was, she hailed the advent of a companion with joy.

After they had been together a few hours, they became great friends.

Emily fancied she had seen Hilda somewhere before, and told her so.

Then it flashed across their minds that how they had met in the Broad Walk, when Hilda was hanging upon Jack's arm.

They saw in an instant they both loved the same man.

"Mr. Harkaway is your sweetheart, dear," said Hilda. "I will not think of him any more. If I had known this at first, I would not have been so silly as to love him."

"We cannot control our hearts," replied Emily, "and I am sure you were not to blame."

"Have you forgiven me for seeming to step between you and your love?"

"Long ago. Jack explained it all to me. Let us not think of the past; our common danger is so great that we must be sisters to each other."

"Willingly, dear Emily," answered Hilda, kissing her tenderly. "I wish Mr. Harkaway knew where we are."

"So do I, he would quickly liberate us; but what I want to know is, why we have been taken here, and with what object."

"Can you think of no one who has prosecuted you with his attentions?"

"There is only Frank Davis from Singapore; he carried me off once before—it may be he; and you, dear, have you no tiresome lover? Surely, with your beauty, you must have many admirers."

"The Duke of Woodstock has been paying me attentions, but I have given him no encouragement because I fancied he was not honorable. The money-lender's daughter, the Jewess, belonging to a despised race is no match for a Duke of England."

"And if she were, would you wed?" asked Emily smiling.

"Perhaps—I know not," answered Hilda in some confusion. "Now I know Mr. Harkaway can never be mine, I might do worse than marry a handsome young gentleman for his money and title."

"If it should be as you suspect," replied Emily, "we will try and frighten his grace into matrimony."

I feel persuaded our friends will find us, and perhaps his lordship would prefer the beautiful Hilda, rather than than be publicly prosecuted for what the law

calls abduction. As for Mr. Davis, I will not rest satisfied until the authorities expel him from Oxford.

Hilda regarded her courageous friend with admiration.

"How brave you are, dear," she said.

"If you had met with the startling adventures I did after I was wrecked, you would know how to think and act in an emergency like this," replied Emily.

Then she related several incidents of their stay in Pisang, praising Jack unavoidably for the share he took in them, till Hilda's face glowed, and she felt that Harkaway was worthy of any woman's love, for he was a hero, without fear and without reproach.

A week passed without the girls seeing anyone, or being able to glean any intelligence from the old woman who attended to their wants.

This alarm increased as the time glided by.

At length their doubts were put an end to by the appearance of the Duke of Woodstock and Frank Davis, who entered the little sitting room together.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon.

The day had been foggy and cloudy.

Rain was falling heavily, and without all was as cold and dreary as the girl's hearts.

"Pardon our intrusion upon your charming privacy, young ladies," said Davis; "we could not keep so much loveliness cooped up any longer without coming to look at it."

Hilda was too much frightened to speak.

But Emily was equal to the occasion.

"Our suspicions were correct, it seems," she said, "when they pointed to you two as our abductors. Your companion, I presume, is the Duke of Woodstock?"

"Aw—no," answered the duke. "Fact is, name of Smith. Mr. Smith of London. Very common name—aw."

"Whoever you are," answered Emily, "depend upon it you will have to pay dearly for this outrage."

"Hope not, aw'm sure," said the duke. "Got no money—aw—bad thing to be—aw—without money."

"How long do you mean to keep us here, and what is your object, Mr. Davis?" continued Emily. "You and I are old enemies. We understand one another, and I can talk to you, but not to that affected and conceited nobleman by your side."

"Bai Jove!" muttered the duke, "little girl's got a good—aw—cheek. Fancy she's giving it me—wather atwong."

"Your question is easily answered," replied Davis. "You will not leave this place until you are my wife."

"Indeed!" she said, with a scornful curl of the lip. "You choose an agreeable way of courting. If that is your determination, I fear I shall spend the remainder of my life here; and Hilda, what is to be her fate?—the same, I suppose?"

"Yes, his grace!"

"Smith, my dear fellow. You forget. Say Smith," put in the duke.

"Nonsense. They know who you are," rejoined Davis, impatiently. "The Duke of Woodstock, I say, Miss Scratchley, is resolved to wed Miss Hilda."

"Whether she will or not?"

"Exactly."

"I suppose you have some mock marriage in contemplation, and have employed some villain like yourself to play the part of priest."

"No, on my honor."

"Your honor!" repeated Emily, satirically. "Do you mean to make me laugh? Honor and you have been on distant terms for some time past."

"You are severe," said Davis, biting his lip.

"Am I?" she replied. "I feel glad you think so. Now hear me, Mr. Davis; if we are not instantly released, we will raise such a hornet's nest about both of you, that you shall be in prison before long."

Davis laughed.

"It is very well to threaten, but you must remember that you are in our power. Think of the concern of your friends at your disappearance."

"That reflection only embitters me more against you."

"Perhaps we have behaved rather harshly," Davis went on; "yet you ought to excuse us when you recollect how we love you."

"Love!"

"Yes, indeed. I am dying with love for you, and the Duke of Woodstock is so smitten with Hilda's charms, that he does nothing but rave about her all day."

"Truth that; it is, bai Jove!" replied the duke. "I'd give a thou. now, for a kiss; fact, I assuaw you."

"We will have nothing to say to you or your love either," said Emily. "Take it where it will be thought most of."

"Perhaps," said Davis, bitterly, "as the weeks slip away, and the long months of your captivity follow one another, you will speak more civilly."

"What?" replied Emily; "do you think that anything would induce us to speak civilly, as you call it, to such villains as you have proved yourself to be. We are only polite to gentlemen, and not to ruffians who disgrace themselves by persecuting helpless girls."

"Your very helplessness ought to be an argument in our favor."

"It is not; and perhaps we are not so utterly defenseless as you imagine. Perhaps Mr. Harkaway is not far from this spot now," said Emily.

She did not hope indeed for any such good luck.

It was a random shot, fired with the intention of frightening her visitors.

"Have you any reason to expect Harkaway?" said Davis, turning white.

"I shall answer no questions."

"Jove!" exclaimed the duke. "Bettaw be off; shouldn't like to meet that fellah Harkaway here—deuced—aw—disagreeable thing that."

"Pray don't go," said Emily, laughing in her sleeve. "I should like to see you face a genuine man."

"Think bettaw go, come 'another time—aw"—cried the duke.

He was restless and uneasy.

"I fancied I saw three fellows following us, and I suspected they were Dawson, Harvey and Harkaway. One was running after us," remarked Davis.

"Awkward, vewy, if they happen to—aw—spot us."

"Well," continued Davis, "we will go, but you may expect us again to-morrow, ladies."

"Let's have—aw—one kiss before we part," said the duke, with an amorous glance in Hilda's direction. "Dash my—aw—buttons, but one kiss."

Hilda had been crouching up in a corner.

He advanced to the lovely Jewess, and tried to kiss her.

She shrieked loudly, and beat him back with her hands, and struggled furiously.

"Can't do better than follow a good example," remarked Frank Davis; "one kiss from your pretty lips, Emily."

Emily, however, was not inclined to gratify him.

She ran to the window, threw it open, and cried loudly for assistance.

"Help, help!" she screamed. "We shall be murdered! Help, help!"

Davis's arm was round her waist.

She felt his hot breath on her cheek.

"By heaven!" he cried, "I will have a kiss, if I die for it." Suddenly a voice exclaimed:

"All right, Emily. Hold on a minute, I'm here, and two more not far off."

Emily uttered a cry of joy.

Then she fell down in a swoon.

The man who had answered her desperate appeal for help was Harkaway.

He was coming along at the double to the rescue.

When he spoke he was only a few yards off the cottage.

CHAPTER V.

STORMING THE COTTAGE.

FRANK DAVIS was right when he fancied that he and the Duke of Woodstock were followed as they left Oxford.

They drove quickly in a phaeton which they had left in the road.

But swiftly as they went, they were not fast enough for Jack.

His wind was in excellent order, and he kept the carriage in sight all the way till it stopped.

Then he followed its occupant to the cottage, and waited for Sir Sydney Dawson and Harvey to come up.

He would have gone to the cottage at once, had he not feared to do so single handed.

After long consideration, his suspicions pointed to Davis.

"Watch him," said Dawson.

Harvey agreed with this opinion.

The consequences was that Davis and the Duke were seen to leave the college together, and pursued with the successful result we have indicated.

Jack would not have made his presence known unless Emily had appealed for help as she did.

Then he could bear the suspense no longer.

Dawson and Harvey, not being such good runners, were a little way behind.

But they too heard the piteous scream, and rushed on with renewed vigor.

The two sons of the laborer to whom the cottage belonged had just come home from work.

As it was such a wet and miserable day they left off earlier than usual.

Davis saw the danger in which he was placed.

"Mind the girls," he exclaimed to Woodstock, and rushed down stairs.

"Barricade the doors back and front," he called to the men. "You shall have five pounds a-piece if you will do what I tell you."

This was a large sum of money to people in their position.

They obeyed his commands with alacrity.

The doors were made safe from an attack from without by heavy iron bars.

In a short space the windows were also secured, and chairs placed against them, backed up with bedding to prevent the entrance of stones and bricks.

"Now, my fine fellows, kick it out till you are tired," said Davis, looking round complacently.

He was joined by the duke.

"Both—aw—women faint. Thought it best to—aw—leave them," he said.

"Never mind them at present," replied Davis.

"What's—aw—this row?"

"Harkaway and some friends of his has followed and found us out. He knows Emily is here, because he heard her scream."

"Heard her scream. Deuced awkward fix—aw," said the duke.

"We must stand a siege, that's all. Bother that man Harkaway: he's always got the kick on his side."

"Wondaw," said the duke, "if these people have—aw—any liquor?"

"Not they," answered Davis. "They are too poor. Think of our position. How are we to get out of this scrape?"

"Beastly awkward scawpe. Think shall cut the—aw—university, and take a cruise in my—aw—yacht somewhere down the—aw—Mediterranean way."

"What is a poor beggar like me to do? I wish I had never mixed myself up in the mess," said Davis, biting his nails with vexation.

"Your governaw is rich—aw."

"I know that; but he'll have me back again to that beastly Singapore, which I hate, if I am sent away from Oxford."

"Nevaw mind. Come with me—aw—we'll enjoy

ourselves. Bothaw Oxford. What's Oxford—aw—to us?" said the duke.

His further utterance was cut short by a furious attack upon the door.

"Pound away," exclaimed Davis. "It can stand all that."

Jack had been joined by Sir Sydney Dawson and Harvey.

Briefly he explained to them what had taken place. Their blood boiled at the thought of the helpless girls, who were probably being insulted by their cowardly abductors.

Presently the knocking ceased.

"Within there!" exclaimed Jack.

"Don't answer him," whispered Davis.

"Open the door, or we'll break it in," cried Jack. There was no reply.

Again the hammering commenced.

It lasted a good ten minutes, when the assailants saw it was useless to continue the attack in that direction. For some time there was a dead silence.

Then the chairs and bedding fell down, and a dark form appeared on the sill.

It was Sir Sydney Dawson, armed with a thick stick. Immediately it was seen that they were taken by surprise, the two sons of the laborer rushed to the threatened point.

Eazh fell to the ground from a well-directed blow from Sir Sydney.

"Who is the next gentleman?" he exclaimed, blantly. Davis took up a large kettle and threw it at him.

"It struck him on the chest, and he fell back on the grass, having lost his balance."

He was up again, however, before they could close the window.

"Thank you," he said. "Perhaps you will oblige me again?"

The laborer himself now attacked him with a spade. It appeared to be Dawson's object to divert the attention of those in the cottage, for he contented himself with parrying the blows with the spade and chaffing those inside.

"Quite a family party," he said. "Sorry to disturb you. What, you won't be quiet, old gentleman? Take that, then, in return for the last prod you gave me on the shins, which is somewhat painful. Down again! Who is the next gentleman?"

The laborer had his head broken by a well-directed blow from Dawson's bludgeon, and he joined his two sons.

Davis picked up a poker, and took up the battle, but Dawson, being perched upon the window-sill, had the advantage of fighting from a superior height.

The contest went on between them for some time, Dawson receiving a few blows, and Davis at last getting one on the sword arm, which made it fall helpless by his side.

With a fierce howl he withdrew, and the poker slipped from his hand.

"Thank you. Sold again and got the money. Who is the next gentleman?" exclaimed Sir Sydney, with his habitual smile.

No one answered.

"My lord duke," he continued, addressing his grace, who had taken no part in the combat, "can I oblige you?"

"Aw—thank you, not at pwsent. Not a fighting man, you see—aw," replied the duke.

A low whistle was heard outside.

"Mr. Davis," said Dawson.

"What is it?" asked Davis, sullenly.

"I think I have made a very clever diversion for my two friends, Mr. Harkaway and Harvey. While I have been amusing myself with the inmates of the garrison, they have by the aid of Providence and a ladder, rescued the two ladies whom you held in captivity in an upper chamber."

"Deuce take the—!" cried Davis, livid with rage.

"In two minutes they will be on the road to Oxford in your carriage, being under the care of Mr. Harvey."

"Ten thousand furies!" almost shrieked Davis.

"Do you want to madden me?"

"Pardon me; one minute more. Mr. Harkaway and myself remain behind for the express purpose of setting fire to this cottage in two places, and burning it to the ground."

"You dare not."

"Time will show," replied Sir Sydney, adding, "when we return to Oxford, your conduct will be laid before the authorities; proceedings will be taken criminally against you; and if the Duke of Woodstock does not marry Miss Hilda Manasses, a long term of imprisonment will probably await his amorous grace."

"Mawy a Jewess," replied the duke; "that's a neat idea."

"It will be a case of the Jewess or the jail, my lord. While to Mr. Davis no mercy at all will be shown, and if he is wise, he will not return to the college at all."

He turned his head to speak to Jack.

Then he resumed:

"Mr. Harkaway informs me that the ladies have started, that he is quite prepared with dry straw and matches. I have the honor to hope, gentlemen, that you will enjoy the little fire we intend to light for you."

Sir Sydney disappeared from the window.

His antagonists were dumbfounded.

The laborer and his sons were on their legs, and rubbing their hands with their knuckles, while they looked around them in some confusion.

Davis ran up stairs.

The rooms were empty.

A ladder stood against the window, and he saw that Sir Sydney Dawson had not misled him.

While he was engaging their attention below, the bird had flown.

"The game's up," he muttered. "I shall go to London. Oxford is no longer the place for me. As to

Woodstock, he'd better marry the Jewess, or get out of it as he can."

Suddenly a smell of fire ascended the stairs, which was followed by a dense smoke.

"By Heaven!" he cried, "they have set the cottage on fire."

He was right.

Harkaway and Dawson had set light to the vile den in two different places.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MATCH AT LORD'S.

FEELING satisfied that Harkaway and Dawson really had set fire to the cottage, Davis did the most clever thing he could under the circumstances.

He got out of the window, and descended by the ladder which had enabled Emily and Hilda to escape.

About the same time, those on the ground floor of the cottage, not wishing to be suffocated like rats in a drain, opened the door.

They were just in time.

The flames had caught the old tumble-down place in two quarters, and were already raging furiously.

With a sort of stupor the laborer and his family gazed at the work of devastation.

They were losing their all, but they had richly deserved it.

Rousing himself at last, the old man went up to Jack, who was standing a short distance off, watching the conflagration with folded arms.

By his side was Sir Sydney.

Frank Davis and the Duke of Woodstock, heartily ashamed of themselves, slunk off together.

"It be you who ha' done this," exclaimed the laborer.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"What beest thy nam?"

"Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldate's."

"I'll make 'ee pay for it," said the old man, angrily.

"If you want compensation for what I have done, you should apply to your noble employer, the Duke of Woodstock, who has just left your burning cottage."

"Be 'e the Dook of Woodstock?" cried the laborer, in surprise.

"Yes. And he has hired you to do a dirty action, for which you ought to be kicked, and are justly punished; he should see you through it, and not let you suffer for the result. You will get no compensation out of me—not a rap."

"Hey! and why noat?"

"I will tell you, man," continued Jack. "You have detained two young ladies in your house in a most unjustifiable manner. You kept them prisoners against their will, and any magistrate in England would say it served you right if you lose everything you have got."

"We be turned out of house and hoam."

"All your own fault. See your employers."

Jack turned on his heel, and taking Dawson's arm, walked back to Oxford, talking, as he went, about what had happened.

He was furiously enraged against Davis and the duke, but delighted beyond measure at having rescued the girls after all.

The flames of the burning cottage lit up the surrounding country for a time.

Then all was desolate and dull again.

The cottagers were ruined, but, as Jack said, it served them right.

In the end they obtained a sum of money from the duke, and were better off than they were before.

Emily returned to her situation at Oakley Wood.

Hilda went to her father, who was full of gratitude.

He told Jack that his fortune was at his disposal. Once he had saved his daughter's life, now he had saved her honor.

Frank Davis did not show up again in the university. He vanished, and no one knew where he went to.

Threats of exposure and prosecution induced the Duke of Woodstock to marry the fair Hilda.

She did not love him, but knowing she could never be Jack's wife, she made the best of her lot, and became a duchess.

This pleased old Manasses immensely.

The duke did not continue to reside in the university.

He went abroad with his beautiful bride, and when his friends became reconciled to the match, it was admitted on all sides that he might have done worse.

Manasses gave his daughter a hundred thousand pounds, which was a noble fortune, as the Duke of Woodstock's title was not a rich one.

"He could—aw—draw upon the old man," he remarked, "if he—aw—evaw became hard up. Something—aw—to have a rich—aw—father-in-law."

This was a consolation to his grace's mind.

Jack congratulated himself upon getting rid of one of his enemies.

Hunston was not seen in Oxford after this affair, in which he played such a base part.

It was supposed he had made himself scarce, fearing the law would be put in motion against him.

So only Kemp remained behind to be a thorn in Harkaway's side.

Davis, however, did not leave England.

It was destined, however, that he should still influence Harkaway's career in a most remarkable and romantic manner, as will be related as we proceed.

May passed, and the lovely summer time commenced, so favorable to cricket.

Jack had not forgotten his school days, and it was found that he was such a good batsman that he was put in the eleven.

Bowling was not his strong point, but he was an excellent field, and could throw up against any one at Oxford.

Every one looked forward with considerable interest to the great annual match between Oxford and Cambridge at Lord's ground in London.

Sir Sydney Dawson, Harvey, and Carden, and a host

of other men, obtained leave to go up to town to witness the match.

Great expectations were formed respecting the Oxford team, which was a capital eleven.

Cambridge had been successful for two years in succession, and it was hoped that this time Oxford would reverse the verdict, and score a victory.

Mr. Bedington, his wife, and Emily, were all in London, staying at the Langham Hotel, where Jack joined them.

They had their carriage sent into the ground over night, and took up their position in the front row about eleven.

At twelve the wickets were pitched, and Oxford having won the toss, they elected to go in.

The morning was a lovely one. If anything, the sun was a little too hot, but this was better than having rain.

Vast crowds of spectators thronged the ground, and the applause was great when the Oxford captain sent Harkaway and the Honorable H. Cavendish to the wickets.

Play began. In the first over Cavendish was caught off the bat by the wicket-keeper. Loud cheers arose from the Cantabs. No runs for one wicket. Tom Carden went in next.

He was not a brilliant player, but cautious and steady. He puzzled the bowling by his defense, and was fond of blocking the ball, and making ones off tips.

By this time Jack had mastered the bowling, and began to play.

His first hit was a fine cut to leg for four, well run.

Then he made several singles, being well assisted by Carden.

Two maiden overs followed, but Jack getting well on to the ball, drove it to the pavilion for six.

For fully an hour the two boating-men faced one another.

It was a tedious piece of leather-hunting for the Cantabs, as the ball went over the field.

At last Carden was cleaned bowled, stumps flying.

And balls being scattered.

"How's that, umpire?" cried the delighted captain of Cambridge.

"Out," was the stolid reply.

Up went the ball high in the air, amidst the cheers of the spectators.

Carden was much applauded, as he had played a very steady innings of twenty-seven.

The score with wides and byes, now stood at fifty-nine for two wickets.

Harvey, who was also in the eleven, went in next.

His career was a short, but brilliant one.

He made four threes, a six, two fours, and seven singles.

Jack's score was rising rapidly, and as Harvey went out, the 100 went up amidst loud cheering.

Soon after there was an adjournment for luncheon, and in the pavilion Jack was congratulated upon his play.

"Carry your bat out, old man," said Dawson, "and we shall lick them in one inning."

"I feel as though I could do anything to-day," replied Jack, confidently.

After luncheon he went in again, having Lord Tabley facing him.

Tabley was the captain of the eleven, and great things were expected of the two.

For did they disappoint their admirers.

The score rose steadily to 200, of which Jack contributed half.

When his three figures were telegraphed, the shout might have been heard in Regent's Park.

"Isn't Jack playing a fine innings?" remarked Harvey to Mr. Bedington, over the side of whose carriage he was leaning.

"Splendid! Jack's a fine fellow," replied his father.

Emily's face flushed at hearing her lover praised.

"Have some champagne, Harvey. It won't hurt you this hot day," said Mr. Bedington.

"Thank you, sir," replied Dick, as the servant handed him some wine deliciously iced.

"Jack will become quite famous in sporting and athletic circles, will he not?" said Emily, "since his name is getting in the papers as a boating and cricketing man of great promise."

"I hope it won't make him forget his reading," remarked Mr. Bedington.

"Not it, sir. Jack sticks to his lectures like a leech, and has a coach too. He'll come out a double first in the school, you see if he doesn't," cried Harvey, who firmly believed his dear old friend to be an Admirable Crichton, capable of doing everything, and doing it well, too.

Steadily the play went on.

Lord Tabley went out for fifty.

Still the score rose.

Three hundred were marked, and there was yet two wickets to go down.

It seemed as if Jack would carry his bat out after all, and he dearly wished to manage the achievement, which is so much prized amongst cricketers, but so very seldom accomplished.

Exactly at twenty minutes past four, the last Oxford man was bowled.

Jack carried his bat out for 175 and the grand total of the Oxford eleven was 391.

"Let them beat that if they can," shouts Oxford, excitedly. "Bravo, Harkaway. Well played indeed, sir. Hurrah for Harkaway!"

With difficulty Jack kept the crowd off and he was glad when his sympathizing friends were driven back, as the two first Cantabs came in.

Jack was "long off."

The fielding of Oxford was as good as her batting, and the bowling as true as a die.

There was no trifling with it.

Twenty-two eyes followed every movement of the ball—twenty-two arms and hands were ever on the

alert, and as many legs were ready to run like steam-engines at the slightest provocation.

Up goes the ball, high in the air—a perfect skyer.

It travels towards Jack, and threatens to go over his head into the crowd beyond.

He runs back to stop it, keeping his eye on the flying disc.

"He'll miss it," said the crowd.

"No, he won't."

"Yes, he will."

"No, no."

"By Jove! he's got it."

And again the throng shouts itself hoarse, as it says:

"Bravo, Harkaway! Well caught, by Jove, sir."

Jack had sprung clean up a foot or two from the ground, and caught the skyer with his left hand in grand style.

Then went out the hope of the Cambridge eleven.

The best bat they had, the pride of the eleven, and the hope of the university.

Four wickets went down for sixty, and then Jack had another chance of distinguishing himself.

A tremendous drive came towards him.

He ran up and stopped it.

"Well hit, well hit, run it out," cried the Cambridge men. "Run it out!"

Jack saw his chance, and took a shot at the stumps, which considering the distance, was a dangerous thing to do.

Knowing what Jack was capable of, the wicket-keeper returned to the other side, and did not attempt to stop the ball.

The stumps were hit, and flew about like pieces of animated wood.

In surprise, the batsman stopped and stared half way.

He was out.

Again the crowd shouts itself hoarse, and the reporters in the press tent made a note for publication of this clever bit of fielding on the part of Harkaway.

At six the Cambridge men were all out for the paltry amount of 120.

They followed their innings.

When the stumps were drawn, they had three wickets down for eighty.

Jack was a hero that evening, and went to the play with his friends.

The next day the match was a foregone conclusion.

By half-past one Cambridge was all out for 210, which gave them a total of 330; therefore, they lost the match in one innings, and Oxford had 61 to spare.

"If it hadn't been for Harkaway, we might have pulled it off," said the light blues, disconsolately.

But it is just such men as Harkaway who win battles and change the fortunes of nations, as well as win boat-races and cricket-matches.

The playground shows what a man is capable of, and gives promise of what he can, may, and will do in the great world.

Jack was a great man in Oxford now, and may fairly be called one of the shining lights and leaders of the university.

Soon after the long vacation commenced.

He went home, passing his time in reading, principally, for he meant to take high honors if he could.

A trip to France in August was an agreeable change, and he returned home in time for the partridges.

Being a keen sportsman, and a good shot, he made sad havoc with the birds.

Harvey spent nearly all the vacation with him, and in October he visited Sir Sydney Dawson, and helped him to kill the pheasants.

It was with genuine pleasure that when the winter term came, he once more took up his residence in Oxford, which he loved so well.

His first visit was to Moses Manasses, to inquire after his daughter.

Hilda was at Baden Baden with her husband, the Duke of Woodstock.

She wrote contentedly, and said that her position abroad was a magnificent one; her pride was gratified, and she found such delight in continental society, that she did not care about having married for position.

The duke was kind to her.

Manasses went on making money, all of which he declared should be his daughter's.

"Woodstock, sir," he remarked, "shall be the richest duke in England when I die."

Jack believed he would keep his word.

"Ah, sir," added the Jew, "all this monish might have been yours, but you are a gentleman, Mr. Harkaway, and have behaved like one. God bless you, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless you. My daughter owes her life and her honor to you. I am fond of monish—it is my trade, but should you want any, come to me; my purse is yours."

"Thank you very much," answered Jack: "but I hope I'm all right. I don't bet, I don't gamble, and am not extravagant."

"You don't know, sir, what may happen. Come to me—come to old Moses Manasses of the Corn Market, Oxford, if ever you are pushed into a corner. So help me, Mr. Harkaway, you shall have a cheque. I'll charge you no interest, and if you never pay me, I shall never ask you."

"You're a good fellow, Manasses," exclaimed Jack.

"No, I'm not," exclaimed the Jew; "many will tell you a different tale, but I'm genuine to you, sir. Let us be friends, Mr. Harkaway, I've got few enough."

"Why?"

"Because I'm a Jew and lend money, that's all. Jack shook him cordially by the hand.

"I'll come in sometimes," he said, "and smoke a pipe with you. If you're a bad Jew, all I can say is that I've met many a worse Christian."

Moses Manasses was delighted at this compliment.

He repeated his offer: told Jack that if it had not been for him Hilda would never have been a duchess,

and ended by making him accept a hundred-pound note as a present.

"Young men never have too much monish, Mr. Harkaway, and you've done me many a good turn. Take it, sir. If you don't, I'll—I don't know what I'll do; but by Abraham, it will be something dreadful!"

Jack smiled, took the note, and went to his rooms.

Harvey was there, talking to Monday.

Monday had been given some money by Jack during the "long" to travel about England, Scotland and Ireland.

He came back a great man in his own estimation, for he had seen a great deal.

"Oh, I say, Jack!" exclaimed Harvey, "there's a card for you."

Jack took it, and read:

"Mr. Gentle May."

"I don't know anyone by that name," he said.

"I thought not; but the cove said he had a letter of introduction to you."

"Is he a freshman?"

"Yes; I'll swear he is, for a more spooney bloke I never saw in my life; he is as soft as putty," replied Harvey.

"Where is he now?"

"Said he would come back in half an hour."

"All right," replied Jack. "Monday."

"Sare," replied the black.

"Show Mr. Gentle May in when he calls, and order me a broil from the 'Mitra' at six; I shan't dine in hall to-day," said Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

GENTLE MAY.

"So you are clearing off your enemies one by one," remarked Harvey. "Davis is gone, Hunston has sloped, and Kemp doesn't seem in good form."

"He is poor," answered Jack. "I heard that his father was only a curate somewhere in Berkshire. He must have dropped a pot over the boat race."

"Old Mo' lent him some coin at the time, and is pressing him for it."

"Is he? Manasses would do anything for me. I'll give Kemp a shove up behind when I see the Jew," said Jack.

"I would—he deserves a lift; but I don't think you have much to fear from Kemp now Davis is gone. Davis used to pay Kemp."

"I know; but Davis may pull the strings from a distance. From what I know of Davis's character I should say he was not a man to give up a hatred easily, and he will be all the more vindictive toward me now; besides, he will have nothing else to do but to think how he can badger me."

"Davis has a rich father—it's nice to have a father," said Harvey, with a laugh—"and he will be all right for coin in London."

"Well, don't talk about the beast," replied Jack, impatiently. "I don't want to think of him; let him slide. He may be well off or not; I don't care so long as he don't worry me. As for Kemp, if he has to leave, his only resource would be skittle sharpening."

"Or he might turn billiard-marker," suggested Harvey.

Jack laughed.

"His game would be plunder in some shape or other," he said; adding, "there is some one at the door, Mr. May, perhaps. Wonder what sort of pup he is?"

It was Mr. Gentle May, who, preceded by Monday, entered the room with a girl-like simper and an awkward bow.

He was about the average height, had a dark complexion, which contrasted strangely with lightish hair of a curling tendency, parted in the middle; his mustache was fair; whiskers and beard he had none. About his mouth there was a smile half-imbecile, half-cubing, and his manner was confused and shy.

"Have I the pleasure," he said, "of addressing Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldates?"

"That's my name, said Jack, "but I am engaged with a friend. In what way can I serve you?"

"Ah," replied Mr. May, "dear mamma said I should find Oxford very practical, and that the men—I mean the gentlemen there would soon make a man of me. I am recalled to myself. Thank you, Mr. Harkaway, for reminding me that at last my frail bark is launched upon the waters of the wide, wide world. Ma said—"

"Will you come to the point, sir?" exclaimed Jack.

"Ah, yes, certainly. Ma always said that I was so discursive. You know, Mr. Harkaway, or rather you do not know, that I have eleven sisters; I am the only boy in the family, and they have all made a great pet of me."

"Glad to hear it. Pity you left home, isn't it?" said Jack.

"No, I want to be a man, and, as I have never been to school, I am rather soft, ma says."

"Your mother is right for once in her life, although I have not the honor of the lady's acquaintance," answered Jack, impatiently.

"Oh, ma always is right," answered Gentle May, seriously; "she and my elder sister, Robertina—we call her Bobby, Mr. Harkaway—taught me all I know, with the exception of the music, my second sister, Thomasina—we call her Tommy, Mr. Harkaway—made me learn; and I can do Latin and Greek, and French and—"

"Come and see me again to-morrow, will you?" said Jack. "You've been here half-an-hour; you shall have the same amount of time each day until the end of the week, and by that time, if you have not got to your business, I shall turn you up."

"Certainly; very kind of you, Mr. Harkaway. Good-day, to-morrow I will be with you betimes. Ma says I'm so slow, and Bobby's always scolding me for not collecting my ideas," said Mr. Gentle May.

"Monday!" shouted Jack, "the door."

"Monday let the visitor out, and Jack and Harvey began to laugh.

"That's a queer character, if you like," said Jack. "I can't believe any man could be such an ass at his age—fancy his talking about his ma and his sisters. I think he's kidding."

"What?" said Jack.

"Humbugging, putting on."

"Why should he?"

"You will know what brings him to you to-morrow."

"Yes; I wish I hadn't started him now, my curiosity is excited. Here comes my humble dinner; have a bit?"

"Don't mind if I do. Never can settle down at Oxford the first day," answered Harvey.

"You know you are welcome, Dick," said Jack, good-naturedly. "If it was my last crust, I'd share it with you."

"And you know, Jack, that I'd sell my boots and go barefoot, if it would do you any good," answered Harvey.

"Of course you would, and I'd ask you to do it in a moment if there was necessity for it, dear boy, but I'm flush. Old Manasses gave me a hundred pounds, and if you will have half—" Harvey hesitated.

"I won't ask you; I'll make you have it. Take it Dick; it will pay for lots of little things you want. What? you won't! I shall have to slip it into you, if you don't do what you are told," he added.

Harvey took the money.

The tears came into his eyes.

"If I didn't like you so much as I do, Jack," he exclaimed, "I'd see you at Pisang before I'd touch a halfpenny piece of it."

"Shut up, do," said Jack, looking as if it was the first time he had done a kind thing in his life.

"All right. I'll have my revenge the first time I get half a chance," said Harvey, laughing.

Then they had a nice little dinner, and a bottle of claret—best Lafitte—and talked together as only old friends who love one another with all their hearts can talk.

As Jack was coming out of chapel the next day, he met his visitor of the preceding afternoon, who with the same civility, asked him how he was, and accompanied him to his rooms.

Jack volunteered to take his new friend to lectures, which he did.

When they were over, May proposed to walk through the town.

Passing a hotel, Jack proposed a glass of beer.

"What would ma say," answered Gentle May, "if she only knew I drank beer before dinner?"

"Better telegraph home and ask her permission," replied Jack.

"No. I mean to be gay," said May. "I am not at home now, and I shall do as you all do up here."

They strolled into a billiard room which was empty. Jack began to knock the balls about.

"Do you play?" he asked.

"A little. I know bagatelle. I can beat my sisters at that. Let us play for something; I have plenty of money."

"No. I don't care about that—not with you at least," answered Jack.

"We will play five games. You give me twenty out out of fifty. If you beat me three times, you shall have my new horse, which ma gave me, and if I beat you, you shall pay me the value of the horse."

"All right," said Jack. "That seems fair. Will you break?"

"Yes," replied Gentle May.

He took the spot ball and made a miss in baulk; Jack followed, the game proceeded evenly until Jack had a lucky break, which made them thirty all.

Then May went ahead and won easily.

"One to you," said Jack. "It doesn't look like my winning the horse."

"Oh, it's only my flukes. See what luck I had," replied Gentle May.

Jack won the second game, but May easily beat him in the third and fourth.

"That's three to me," he cried. "What would ma say if she knew I had such luck?"

"What do you value your horse at?" said Jack, biting his lips with vexation. "We forgot to settle that."

"Oh, he is a very good horse, but I will say forty pounds to you."

Jack took out of his pocket the notes Moses Manasses had given him, and with something like a groan, paid the money.

To be beaten in such an easy way by a man like Gentle May was a disgrace.

He calculated upon an easy victory; in which case he would not have accepted the horse.

May pocketed the money, and said:—

"Do you want a horse, Mr. Harkaway?"

"As it happens, I do," replied Jack. "A little exercise on horseback would do me good."

"If you give me twenty pounds more, you shall have mine. Pay me when you like. Your note of hand will do."

Jack thought he spoke in a very business-like sort of manner.

"Let's go and see it," he said.

"Come with me. It is at the stables," replied May, adding—"Oh! what would ma say if she knew I was going to sell the fiery steed she gave me? It is fiery, but so easily managed by a good rider."

They went to the stables, and Jack thought Gentle May knew his way very well about Oxford for a freshman, as he went direct to the street without asking his way.

The horse was a fine handsome chestnut, and seemed cheap at sixty pounds.

A groom touched his hat to Jack, who recognized

him as a man who attended to Sir Sydney Dawson's steeple-chaser, and to whom he had given something after winning the race.

"Going to buy a horse, Mr. Arkaway, sir?" said the groom, whose name was Stubbles.

"Think of it," replied Jack.

Stubbles beckoned him on one side.

"Reg'lar vicious brute, that, sir," he said. "Crib-biter, kicker, bolter, a perfect wretch, sir, all up his darned back. Don't you have no truck with him."

"Is he sound?"

"Sound as a roach, sir, and right as the mail. He's got wind and bottom enough to win a Darby. That ain't what I'm a-talking of; it's 'is beastly temper, sir, Mr. Arkaway, sir."

"Well, I'm not a chicken, Stubbles; I can ride a little bit," replied Jack, with a smile.

"In course you can, sir. There hain't your match in Hoxford; no, nor in the shire, for that matter. Still, I wouldn't part my coin for a hugely-tempered hefephant like that. More like a potamus, he is, for tricks and wice, than a decent bit of 'orseflesh."

This description of the horse put Jack on his mettle. He wanted a mettlesome leader for a new tandem he was going to drive, and he determined to have this horse—more out of bravado than anything else.

Besides he had paid forty pounds, which he had fairly lost at billiards, therefore, if he gave another twenty, he would have his money's worth in the form of a good horse.

"Where did the horse come from?" he asked.

"It is a London 'orse, sir," answered Stubbles.

"Leastways I think so, because it belonged to Mr. Davis of St. Aldate's who had it sent up here afore he left."

"Davis?" repeated Jack.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Arkaway, sir; but Mr. May he showed us a receipt from Mr. Davis for the 'orse, so we suspect he bought it off him."

Jack thought it very odd, and going back to Gentle May exclaimed:

"Do you know Mr. Frank Davis who was up here last term?"

"No," replied May, "not in the least. Stay," he added. "That is the gentleman ma's agent bought the horse from. I remember now; I have the receipt from a Mr. F. Davis."

"Oh, that is it," said Jack. "Well, I'll buy him."

"He is yours. I thought him too mettlesome for me, and am glad to get rid of him. A park hack is more my style. When I go out riding, the vulgar little boys about shouts out—'Get inside, and pull the blinds down!' It makes me so wild, Mr. Harkaway, to be chaffed before ma and Bobby and Thomasina."

He turned away as Jack gave some instructions to the groom, and muttered to himself:

"If the brute doesn't break his neck, it isn't my fault. Deuce take him!"

Jack did not hear this, or his suspicions respecting Mr. Gentle May would have been speedily aroused.

As it was, he thought him a strange mixture of cunning and simplicity.

Not a bad fellow at heart, but half rogue, half flat; in face, a man who would develop in time, and become clever.

"He's been brought up at home with a lot of sisters," thought Jack, "and that is sure to spoil the best man that ever was born. A man can't learn any good out of a parcel of girls."

They walked home together, and May invited him to tea in his room, which, oddly enough was the very same that Davis used to occupy.

The same furniture remained in it, and Jack could not help fancying that he was once more friendly with Davis.

When he asked Mr. May how he became possessed of the furniture he told him that his "ma's" agent in Oxford had bought the furniture from a gentleman who had left, but he did not know his name.

Jack thought it was very funny that May should buy Davis's horse, have Davis's room and even his furniture.

But he did not say anything.

May showed him great hospitality, tried to make himself agreeable, was very funny in his simple manner, and Jack soon dismissed from his mind the suspicion that he could in any way be connected with his late enemy Davis.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE ARRIVAL AT OXFORD.

The next day Harvey gave Jack a look up after breakfast, and said:

"Are you going to lectures this morning?"

"No, I mean to cut the shop to-day," replied Jack; "fact is, I've bought a horse, and May and I are going out riding."

"You seem to be wrapped up in that ass," said Harvey.

"The beggar sticks to me so, and I don't see any harm in him. Come with us."

"I don't mind, though I would rather Mr. May was not one of the party. I went to his rooms last night, after you, but you had left, and what do you think I saw on the table?"

"Wine, I suppose," said Jack.

"No, I didn't; it was a wig."

"A what?"

"A wig thing, exactly like his own head of hair. He scrambled it up and put it in his pocket. What on earth does he want a wig for?"

"By Jove!" said Jack, "that's funny. He's a queer fish altogether."

"So I think, and the less you have to do with him the better. What horse is this you are going to try?"

"One I bought from May."

"Already! He's got an eye to business," replied Harvey.

"Don't bully the man. You are jealous, Dick."

"No, I'm not, but I don't like him. I can't put up with him at all."

"What harm can a fool like that do me? Shut up."

"I'll meet you at the stables," replied Harvey.

In ten minutes they were all mounted.

The groom whispered to Jack:

"Don't touch him with the spur, sir. He can't abear it, and will bolt like nine pins."

"All right," answered Jack.

They took the Abingdon road, and chatted pleasantly as they went along.

After going a few miles Gentle May exclaimed:

"How do you like the horse, Mr. Harkaway? Put him through his paces. You haven't tried him at a fence yet."

There was a five-barred gate on one side leading into some meadows.

Forgetful of the groom's advice, Jack drove the spurs into the animal's side and put him at the gate.

For a moment the horse reared dangerously, and had not Jack struck him with the whip between the ears, he would have fallen back on him and crushed him in the road.

Then he took the bit between his teeth, rose at the gate, cleared it, and was off like the wind.

"Case of bolt," said Harvey.

He was right.

Jack found he had no control over him, and sticking his knees well in, gave him his head and let him go.

Away he went, over ditches and hedges, across meadows and ploughed fields, without showing any symptoms of distress.

At length the river was in front of them.

"I'll make him swim it," said Jack, between his teeth. "Perhaps that will cool his courage."

Accordingly he whipped and spurred the infuriated animal again, and put him straight at the river, which was swollen by recent rain.

Into the angry torrent he plunged, breasting the current.

Slipping his feet out of the stirrups, Jack got off the saddle and swam to the opposite shore.

Here he awaited the arrival of the horse.

The animal was carried some distance by the stream, but landed at last, standing shivering and trembling on the bank.

All the steam was out of him now.

Jack mounted him again and found him as docile as a lamb.

Arriving at Oxford before May or Harvey, he changed his wet things, and by the time he was comfortably smoking a cigar they came in.

"Thank God you are not hurt," said Harvey. "I followed him a little way, but you soon distanced me."

"How did you manage him?" asked May.

"Oh, in my usual way. I'm not split easily," answered Jack, coldly.

"It's time to go down to Mole's and coach," remarked Harvey.

"Is it?" I'll go with you, if Mr. May will excuse me," replied Jack.

May, seeing he was not wanted, made profuse apologies for the misconduct of the horse, for which he hoped he should not be held answerable, and retired.

"Shunted him," said Jack.

"Good sort of a shunt, too," replied Harvey. "That horse was not safe to ride; he's a perfect fiend."

Jack told him how he had conquered him, and they walked down to Mr. Mole's, where, at two o'clock, the men who read with him assembled.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ARRIVAL FROM LIMBI.

In the street were a black woman with two little children, who, while the woman beat a tambourine and sang a wild sort of song, went round and collected the pennies of the benevolent.

"Dash my wig!" said Jack, "I ought to know that language."

"It's Malay, I'll swear," replied Harvey; "they used to sing it in Limbi, and Pisang too."

"Of course. Hold on a minute; we will hear what she has to say," said Harvey.

The woman was dressed in a dirty cotton print, hanging round her in loose folds; her black hair floated in the breeze, and she seemed to be plunged in the depths of poverty.

Her song, which was in blank verse, was as follows:

"Once I was a princess in my dear native plains and all respected me, until a white man came from across the sea and made me his wife. Ah, me! Ay di me; why was I born?"

"The white man was a cruel deceiver, and betrayed the trust I placed in him. Woe to me, for I am undone."

"He had two wives and each bore him a child; ay di me, why was I born?"

"The white man sailed away in a great ship to a distant shore, whither I have followed him. Woe to me."

"His other wife is dead of grief, but I have brought with me her child and my own, and I have vowed to find him. Ah! me, why did I not die also?"

"Oh! white man, oh! my husband, why did you leave me to pine alone?"

"Oh! where are you now? Will no kind stranger lead the poor wife to her husband, that he may see his children?"

"Ah, me! ay di me; why was I born?"

"Jack," exclaimed Harvey, excitedly, "that's Ambonia."

"Just what I was thinking," answered Jack.

"It's Mole's wife, the woman he married in Limbi. She says Alfura is dead, and she has managed to come over here with the kids. What a lark!"

"I'm awfully glad we spotted her; now we'll have a spree," said Jack. "Won't Mole tear his hair? If we hadn't seen her she might have gone wandering about the country and have missed him. Speak to her."

Jack went close to the woman.

"Ambonia," he said.

She started and turned round.

"Who calls me by my name?" she asked.

"An old friend; one whom you knew in Limbi. Do you not recognize me? I will lead you to your husband."

Ambonia uttered a shriek of joy.

She seized Jack's hand and kissed it, saying:

"Tears have blinded my eyes, and much hunger coupled with sleepless nights, has weakened my brain, or I should have known the Tuan Biza of the white man. Welcome, Tuan Biza, you are my savior."

In her great delight she would have gone down on her knees in the street, but Jack restrained her.

"Wait here," he said, "while I go into the house on the left. I will leave the door open. When I call Ambonia, through the window, do you enter, leading a child by each hand."

She nodded her head.

"I understand," she replied; "then I shall see my husband."

"I'll show Mole his wife in ten minutes," answered Jack. "Go on with your performance."

He entered Mr. Mole's house with Harvey, and in the large dining-room, which was turned into a study, several men of different colleges had assembled.

They were smoking, talking, asking questions, making notes, lounging about, standing up, and taking things very easy.

It was part of Mole's system that they should do so. Oxford men were not schoolboys, he said, and should be treated as rational beings.

They paid him to teach them, which he did, and if they did not get their money's worth, it was not his fault.

You could bring a horse to the water, but twenty men could not make him drink.

So it was with learning. If a man had not the aptitude to acquire knowledge, it could not be forced into him.

Mr. Mole was standing near the fire-place, with dressing-gown and slippers on; a cap with a tassel covered his head, and he smoked a cigarette.

"Morning, sir," said Jack: "what are you cramming to-day?"

"It's a general disquisition, Harkaway, upon the manners and customs of the ancient inhabitants of Greece. I maintain that we are more moral as a nation than the Greeks were."

"I am prepared to dispute that point, sir," said Jack.

"Very good. I will hear you first, and then will prove my case by historical illustrations," answered Mole; adding, "If gentlemen would kindly talk a little less at the lower end of the room, it would materially increase our comfort up here."

There was a lull in the conversation.

"We don't hear, sir," said Jack, "of men marrying two wives, and deserting them under the democracy of Athens."

Mr. Mole paled.

"Nor is such a thing allowed under Victoria," he replied. "Polygamy, which, as you are aware, is a union with more wives than one, is an offense to this country, and a man who deserts his wife and children is justly stigmatized as a villain who is unfit to mingle as a harmonious atom in the vast total of modern society."

More than one impressionable freshman made a note of this lovely language in his book, hoping he could remember such an eloquent remark when he went into the schools.

"If," continued Mr. Mole, "you can urge nothing more than that, it will be best for you, Harkaway, to outside. You thrust yourself prominently forward, and you must pay the penalty of your rashness, by sinking into comparative insignificance. Will any other gentleman combat my proposition, that the boasted civilization of the ancient Greeks must yield the palm to modern Europe, for virtue, industry and thrift?"

Jack slipped away to the window, and called Ambonia.

The lady in question was anxiously awaiting his signal.

Leading a dusky child by each hand, she rushed up the steps, crossed the hall, and seeing the dining-room door open, peeped in. The sight of Jack reassured her.

She entered, and gave a furious knock on her tambourine with her knuckles, looked around her.

The husband of her affections, the Mole of her heart, deeply beloved chief of the pale-faces, was in front of her.

She knew him in spite of dressing-gown, smoking-cap and slippers.

What disguise could hide from her hawk-like gaze the tender object of her affection.

With a bound like that of a deer, she sprang upon him, and with a hysterical sob, threw herself upon his breast.

The gentlemen who were reading with Mr. Mole were astonished beyond measure.

What could this strange scene mean?

"Gentlemen," said Jack, "there is a practical illustration of my argument."

"What do you mean?" asked an Oriel man.

"In that lady you behold at one and the same time, a princess and a deserted wife."

"Whose wife?" continued the Oriel man.

"Mr. Mole's. He's married two; one is dead, and by a strange fatality the surviving one has followed him to England—has encountered him at Oxford. Yes, gentlemen, it is his deserted wife."

Jack put his handkerchief to his eyes.

"I am overcome by my feelings," he went on. "I

weep. Who could restrain his tears when he thinks of man's perfidy, and looks upon his helpless offspring? Harvey, put the kids upon the table."

Harvey immediately did so.

"Behold the little cherubs, gentlemen," Jack continued. "What if they resemble sags of boot—I mean bags of soot? Does the color of a child's skin release the parent of his responsibility? Because a woman is black, is she to be foully betrayed and abandoned? Never, gentlemen, will I believe so ill of Oxford as to credit for a moment that you will support such an abominable doctrine."

Here Jack's eloquence was cut short by an inkstand which struck him on the chest, and knocked him off the chair from which he had been spouting.

A deluge of ink covered his face, his shirt, and hands.

It was Mr. Mole, who, having freed himself from Ambonia's frantic embrace, had, in his rising passion at Jack's flood of eloquence, tried to put a stop to it.

"That's a hot un for me," muttered Jack, spitting out a mouthful of ink. "Wonder what they make ink of? It don't taste nice by any manner of means," he added.

Lord cheers had followed Jack's address, and the utmost confusion prevailed.

Every one began to talk at once.

The chaff directed against Mr. Mole was fast and furious.

In a moment the unhappy professor saw that his career at Oxford was cut short by this untimely episode.

Cursing Ambonia in his heart, but afraid to offend her, his face was the picture of despair.

Never could he survive the ridicule which the native wit and the inventive genius of Oxford, would heap upon him.

He might have lived down the mistake of the talking monkey, and he had already tided over the ancient stone with the Runic inscription of Drum. Kasaf. Iddier.

But Ambonia's presence in Oxford was the last straw which was to break the camel's back.

CHAPTER X.

MR. MOLE TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO SCIENCE.

FOR once in his life Mr. Mole was firm.

Calling Jack to his side, he said:

"Harkaway, will you do me a favor?"

"It depends upon what it is, sir," replied Jack.

"Bring those little fiends up-stairs, one under each arm."

"What for?"

"I must take Ambonia away. You have been very indiscreet. Why did you say what you did to all my pupils here?"

"Only told the truth, sir," said Jack. "Is there any harm in that? Was it a virtue in Athens to tell falsehoods?"

"Tush! Tush!" said Mr. Mole.

"What language is that, sir?"

"Tush is English, and means what the military would call cease firing; that is, be quite, for goodness sake."

Ambonia came up to them and began to talk loudly in her own language, while Mr. Mole, endeavoring to pacify her, drew her towards the door, and led her up stairs.

He was the owner of the whole house.

His housekeeper was an aged lady by the name of Bimms.

Mrs. Bimms was one of those dear creatures who have had one husband, and want another.

Her first unfortunate was a tradesman, who at his death left her very poorly off.

Two children had blessed her union with commerce, but they were out in the world gaining their own living.

When Mrs. Bimms came to take charge of Mr. Mole's establishment, she fixed her eye upon such an eligible bachelor.

She even went so far as to hope that he might marry her some day.

Jack called it a swivel eye, and he he did so advisedly, for Mrs. Bimms had an abnormal squint, and seemed always looking round the corner.

This wonderful eye could look anyway and in any direction.

She was in the kitchen preparing a snug little dinner when Ambonia stopped before the house.

It had entered into her calculations that she might be asked to partake of the repast.

When she saw Ambonia enter Mr. Mole's establishment, she was much surprised, and her astonishment increased when she saw her master leading the dark lady up the staircase.

"He must be mad," she said to herself.

Only the day before she had her fortune told by a local soothsayer, who informed her in return for the payment of one shilling, that she would be married again, and that her second husband would be a learned man.

This prediction clearly pointed to Mr. Mole.

But as the prophecy was dictated by the fortune-teller's knowledge of Mr. Bimms' occupation, there was nothing very wonderful in it after all.

Mrs. Bimms rushed up stairs after Mr. Mole and the dark lady and caught them on the landing.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" she asked, breathless with indignation.

"Oh, it is you, Mrs. Bimms," replied Mr. Mole. "This lady is a princess in her own country—I have been abroad as you know."

"I have heard so, sir," replied the housekeeper coldly.

"Well, the fact is we are old friends, and the princess will stay here with her children."

Mrs. Bimms gave a faint scream.

"I didn't think you had done it, sir," she cried.

"You are such a respectable gentleman, too."

"You must do as I tell you; go and get some tea ready."

"Not me, sir. No, I'm an honest Englishwoman, and I ain't a going to wait on no foreign hussies."

"I say you must."

"And I say I won't. There that's flat—flat as a iron," replied Mrs. Bimms, crossing her arms defiantly.

"What does she say, my cherished one?" asked Ambonia, looking up in Mr. Mole's face caressingly.

"Nothing; it's all right," returned the professor, in the Malay dialect. "The children shall come up directly, and I will get you some refreshments. Go into my bedroom and make yourself comfortable. I will get rid of my pupils and rejoin you."

Ambonia went into the handsomely-furnished room, and was enraptured with the beauty of everything.

Shutting the door, Mr. Mole said, sternly to Mrs. Bimms:

"Out of my house, if you please."

"Oh," replied Mrs. Bimms, with a sarcastic smile, "if it's a question atween black and white, I'm willing to quit."

"Be off," said Mr. Mole angrily. "I will be obeyed in my own house."

"Oh, you poor, weak, silly creatures," returned Mrs. Bimms. "I should be ashamed to own you as a master. Fond of a black woman? Well, I never."

She began to laugh heartily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she exclaimed. "Like 'em black he does. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fiend!" answered Mr. Mole. "Let me pass."

He pushed rudely by her, and re-entered the lecture room.

During his absence, Jack and some other men had been having some fun with the children, who were crying bitterly.

Each had a smoking cap on, and they had been grotesquely marked with chalk about the hands, face, and feet.

This had the effect of burnt cork on a white person.

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed Mr. Mole, aghast.

"Piebald kids, sir," replied Jack. "Make their fortune in a caravan at a fair."

"Do you want to distract me?" answered the professor, plunging his hand wildly into his hair.

"Not more than usual, sir," said Jack.

"I shall leave the university."

"Don't do that," said a man from the New, "you'd be a loss."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Mr. Mole, "unhappy circumstances, over which I have no control, will compel me to close my classes. Your subscriptions shall not be payable. Leave me, if you please, until happier times arise."

The men quietly left the house, telling him not to worry himself, but to put on a white wife to counterbalance the influence of the black ones.

Only Jack and Harvey remained.

"Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, solemnly, "I am a disgraced and ruined man. You have exposed me. It is to you I owe my shame."

"Marriage, sir, has its obligations," answered Jack.

"Granted, but why should you expose me?"

"I felt for Ambonia."

"For that black?"

"Don't call names, sir," interrupted Jack. "She was the wife of your bosom."

"In Limbi—yes."

"What is the difference?"

"Over in this country one goes in for color, and white is the fashion," answered Mr. Mole, who in the midst of his grief could not repress a smile.

"Did she not bear you a child? Isn't Alfura dead?"

"—and you have not shed a tear to her memory."

"Perish Ambonia, as Alfura perished," replied Mr. Mole. "I am a ruined man. How can I show my face again in the university at Oxford?"

"I am in an awful stew,

What the dickens can I do,

When I'm hunted from the University of Oxford?"

Sang Jack.

"Harkaway, do you want to madden me?" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

"Shouldn't mind doing it for a change, sir," replied Jack. "What do you think of the ancient Athenian now, sir? Very moral people, weren't they?"

Mr. Mole seized a pipe, filled and lighted it.

He then went to a cupboard, took out a bottle of brandy and drank nearly a tumbler full.

"Give us a wig, sir," said Harvey.

"You want none. You have not the agitated mind with which I am tormented," answered Mr. Mole.

"Going to get tight, sir?" asked Jack.

Mr. Mole puffed away at his pipe in silence.

"If you don't watch it, sir, you'll have Ambonia down after you," said Harvey.

The children, who were still on the table, began to cry.

"Music!" exclaimed Jack.

"Strangle the brutes," said Mr. Mole. "Oh, if any body would put them in the water-butt."

While this conversation was taking place down stairs a scene was occurring at the upper part of the house.

Mrs. Bimms no sooner saw Mr. Mole descend the staircase than she went into the bedroom.

"You ugly, black thing, you!" she exclaimed, shaking her fist.

Ambonia did not understand her, but she guessed from her manner that she was saying something insulting.

"Who you be?" she asked in the little English she had picked up.

"Your betters any way; I ain't black, nor I don't have to run after gentlemen who don't want me."

"Get out of this," said Ambonia, angrily.

"I'll see you—further first," replied Mrs. Bimms, resolutely.

She was a firmly-built woman of forty-five, well nourished upon stout brandy, and her eyes winked wickedly.

It was evident that she meant mischief.

A tall chimney-pot hat of Mr. Mole's was hanging on a peg.

Taking it down with the quickness of lightning, Ambonia seized Mrs. Bimms by the arms, passed them behind her back, and while in a helpless condition, pushed the hat over her face until her head was enclosed in it, and the brim rested on her neck.

"There!" she said, kicking her, and still holding her arms. "Take you that and that. You wantee my husband. Me give you something, you white ugly fat woman."

Tearing a piece of the skirt of the housekeeper's dress, she tied her hands behind her back.

Dismal moans came from beneath the hat.

Ambonia seized Mrs. Bimms's black hair.

It came off, being only a chignon.

"Ha! she not wear her own hair," cried Ambonia.

"Me beatee white woman beast."

She pushed her down stairs, and with pleasure saw her fall down the first flight; then she returned to the room, and began to arrange her hair in a fascinating manner before the glass, in expectation of Mr. Mole's speedy return.

Jack had in the meantime pacified the black children by giving them a penny each.

"Dance, you little demons, dance," he cried in their own language.

They began to move about, first on one leg and then on the other.

"Don't the little Moles do it well?" said Harvey.

"Peace, Harvey, peace?" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "My reason is tottering."

At this moment Mrs. Bimms groped into the room.

At the strange spectacle of a female, her head hidden in a man's hat, Mr. Mole sprang from his seat.

"Bless us and save us! what is it?" he exclaimed.

Jack ran to her, and cut the string which bound her arms.

The housekeeper removed the hat with difficulty and gasped for breath.

"I'll have her life!" she cried. "She did it—that black thing he calls the princess."

"Don't, my dear Mrs. Bimms; forbear!" cried the wretched Mole.

"I'll be the death of her. Yes, I will, if I'm hanged for it."

"Won't something less content you?" said Jack.

"Let her down easy; have her kids."

"Ha!" cried Mrs. Bimms, as her eyes lighted upon the children.

She seized one under each arm and ran frantically away.

Awful yells arose.

"Stop her!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "For the love of heaven stop her. The woman will murder them."

Jack, Harvey and Mr. Mole followed her as speedily as possible.

She took the direction of the back yard.

When they overtook her she was standing complacently before the water-butt.

"Where are my helpless infants?" demanded Mr. Mole.

There was no reply.

"Woman, I demand my children," he cried, shaking her, fearful of the consequence of the dreadful crime.

"Look in the water-butt," replied Mrs. Bimms.

In an instant Jack and Mr. Mole laid hold of the huge tub, and overturned it.

The water rolled out.

So did the little half-drowned Moles.

They were not dead.

The only effects of the immersion was to wash off the chalk with which Mr. Mole's pupils had ornamented them.

Taking them up tenderly, Mole turned to go up stairs with them to their mother.

"Harkaway," he said, "guard that fury."

He pointed to his housekeeper.

"I dismiss her," he added. "She can call for her wages in the morning. Put her out."

"Now then, old girl," said Jack, as Mr. Mole disappeared with the children, "you've got to step it."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Bimms.

"Your name's Walker. Out of this."

"I ain't going."

"Ain't you? We'll see about that," replied Jack.

"Off you go. Quick step; march. One at a time is quite enough for Mr. Mole. Walk."

Mrs. Bimms found herself being gently put out of the yard by the tradesmen's entrance.

When she was in the street, she kicked at the door.

Then she screamed and eventually called—"Police!"

But thinking better of it, she went to her friends, who did not live far off, and made them acquainted with her grievances.

The little Moles were put to bed, and had muffins and tea given them.

They asked for rice and sugar, which they had.

Then they cried because they had eaten too much, and their mother slapped them, after which they cried themselves to sleep.

Ambonia and Mr. Mole descended to the drawing-room, where Jack and Harvey was smoking cigars and drinking beer.

Ambonia went up to Jack and kissed him, whereupon he kissed her back again.

"I say, Harkaway, I can't allow that," exclaimed Mr. Mole.

"It's only a compliment, sir," answered Jack; "and now what are you going to do?"

"That is more than I know," replied Mr. Mole sadly.

Ambonia came and sat on his knee, patting his face

and laughing merrily as she told him in her own language that she had forgiven him for deserting her, and was so pleased to see him again.

She had come over to England in a merchant vessel, her friends supplying her with money.

But when she arrived in London, she could not find him as she expected, and soon her money was gone.

When she was reduced to destitution she determined to go all over the country with the children, until she found him.

Fortune had crowned her labors with success.

Ambonia was happy. Mr. Mole was not.

That made all the difference.

When Jack saw her petting Mr. Mole, he exclaimed: "Now the spooning is going to begin, I'd better cut it. See you again soon, sir. Beg to congratulate you on your good luck."

"Good-night, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole. "I wish you the same luck you have bestowed on me. Good-bye; perhaps forever."

The young men took their leave and went back to Jack's rooms at St. Aldate's, where they had some coffee and sat down to chat.

"Will Mole do anything desperate, do you think?" asked Harvey.

"Not he," replied Jack. "Mole isn't a fool."

"But this affair will smash him up. It will be all over Oxford to-morrow, and he won't keep any pupils."

"He's got the money for which he sold his tea garden in China," said Jack, "and that will keep him."

"Wasn't it too bad of you to expose him?"

"Not a bit; he shouldn't do such things. If a man will marry two wives he must take the consequences."

"The consequences in his case are niggers."

Jack laughed, and some other men coming in, the matter was not further talked about.

Two days passed.

Then Jack went to Mr. Mole's house, and it was shut up.

He was told that Mr. Mole had gone a little way into the country to live.

It was quite a fortnight before Jack got any definite information respecting Mr. Mole.

Then it came from Sir Sydney Dawson, who had been riding in the country. Sir Sydney said he had seen Mole sitting in front of a rustic cottage with two black children running about, and Ambonia making him brandy and soda.

"What's his game?" asked Jack.

"Science, I think," replied Sir Sydney. "Because he told me he was making a balloon."

"What for?"

"That's just what I asked him, and he replied that he wanted to get away from this country. His face was awfully scratched, and his right hand was bound up with rags."

"He's been fighting with Ambonia. I knew how it would be," said Jack. "But the balloon looks me."

"He means to sail away and cut the connection."

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Jack.

"Where will he sail to?"

"Depends upon circumstances. He's got a large tent in which the balloon apparatus is being fixed. I saw the preparations, and the car will be grand."

"Does Ambonia suspect anything?"

"Not she. Her nature is very simple," replied Sir Sydney, "from what I saw of her."

"Fancy Mole going in for science. Wonder if he would give a fellow a lift in his balloon?"

"Let's ask him. My duns are worrying me awfully, and I shouldn't mind a journey somewhere," answered Sir Sydney.

"When will it be ready?"

"Oh, not for months," he said. "It's a very swell affair, and will cost a lot of building and take time."

"I'll keep my eye upon him. Poor old Mole he was always in trouble while he knew me," said Jack.

"If that is the case he would cut your acquaintance if he is wise."

"Can't do it, dear boy," answered Jack. "I have a power of persuasion, which neither moles nor baronets can resist."

"Don't you try it on with me, or I will shunt you in an hour," replied Sir Sydney Dawson, smiling.

Monday knocked at the door.

"What is it?" exclaimed Jack.

"A note from Miss May, sir," answered Monday.

"Give it here. What a nuisance that fellow is."

Jack opened the note after asking Dawson's permission to do so.

As he proceeded to read its contents, he looked pale and a dark frown gathered on his brow.

CHAPTER XL

A MYSTERIOUS PARCEL

SEEING that Jack was upset, Sir Sydney Dawson exclaimed:

"Anything disagreeable in the letter? Is your grand mother dead, or has your sister bolted with the lawyer's clerk?"

"As I have neither one or the other, you are out in both cases," answered Jack.

"Perhaps the bank in which your governor puts his money has gone to smash?"

"Wrong again."

"Then your mother's favorite cat is dead?"

"She hates animals, and we have nothing more important at home than a painted cock-sparrow—pale yellow sort of color, which we are foolish enough to call a canary, but as it never sings, I have my doubts," said Jack.

"Governor go in for cows?"

"Yes, he farms."

"Then the cows have got the rinderpest—what do you call it?—cattle disease; or the rick-yard's burnt down, or his pet bantams have got the pip, or the

churn's gone wrong, or they're hard up for butter or"—

"My dear fellow," replied Jack, "if you were to guess for a month, you wouldn't hit it."

"Let the oracle explain itself. I am not a good hand at guessing. Unfold the mysterious tale forthwith or look out for a book of your head."

"Thank you!" exclaimed Jack. "The book would not be long in coming back again. But, look here, I have had a letter from Gentle May."

"If it's not an impertinent question, who may the individual be?" asked Sir Sydney, crossing his legs.

"A freshman, and the biggest ass I ever saw."

"If names go for anything in this sublunary sphere"—

"That's a big word," exclaimed Jack. "What was it?"

"Allow me to explain. At somebody's lecture the other day, I was taught that a sphere meant a globe, and a globe meant the earth. Sub was Latin for under, and Luna meant the moon, and as our earth is beneath the moon, I intended to convey the idea of the world on which we now sit and smoke to your limited comprehension."

"Thanks," replied Jack, dryly. "Go on."

"That's all."

"You mean that Gentle May ought from his name to be a fool?"

"Exactly," answered Sir Sydney.

"He isn't," said Jack. "I have found him just the contrary, but he has riled me in this letter."

"Oh, it is from the party with the funny name."

"Yes."

"Serves you right. When you are established at a place and have friends, you should not pick up with a lot of new fellows you know nothing about," replied Dawson.

"He brought a letter of introduction to me."

"All the more reason why you should fight shy of him."

"But the introduction"—

"Hate introductions," interrupted Sir Sydney. "A fellow generally wants to get you into some swindle or borrow a five-pound note from you, when he gets an introduction."

"He is so simple, though."

"Possibly. What does his simplicity consist in, in the present instance?"

"He has got the toothache and can't go out—asks me to go to the chemist's and buy him some stuff for his tooth, and then go to the station and inquire for a parcel for him, which I shall find there, and I am to be very careful with it as it contains valuable property."

"That's pretty good cheek for a freshman," said Sir Sydney laughing.

"Just what I thought."

"Fancy making a porter of the best car and the best bat in the university. You should cut this man, Harkaway. It's bad form to know such fellows."

"It's only his simplicity."

"Hang his simplicity, and him too, to the same tree. That's what I should say," replied Dawson.

"I shall humor him and go and do his errands."

"Like a shop boy," said Dawson shrugging his shoulders. "Well there's no accounting for taste."

"Consider a moment."

"It does not want any consideration. All I know is, if a fellow asked me to fetch and carry for him, I should refer him to his scout."

"I'll do that afterwards. It will be a good joke to do as he asks. When we were in London last summer, my father had a house in Belgrave Square. Lord Eccleston called on him, rather badly dressed; and the hall porter thinking he was nobody, said my father was engaged for a few minutes, and asked his lordship to go to the nearest 'pub' and get him a pint of porter, giving him the half-pence, and saying he should have a penny for himself."

"Did he do it?"

"Yes and has told the story as a great joke ever since. The porter almost fainted, when he knew who Eccleston was, and that he was a cabinet minister with twenty thousand a-year."

"Well," said Sir Sydney, "if you are going in for the errand-boy sort of thing, I will see you through it. Let's get him a 'porth of arsenic for his tooth, and shy his parcel at his head."

"We wouldn't behave so ferociously as that," answered Jack, putting on his hat.

They left college together, and went to the railway station, where they asked for, and obtained a heavy parcel, directed to Mr. Gentle May.

Jack put it under his arm, and as they strolled back, they observed Kemp standing inside the entrance to a small hotel near the station.

"There is that fellow Kemp," said Jack. "If it wasn't for him I should like a beer."

"Never mind him. I certainly should not keep out of a place because he was in it," answered Sir Sydney.

"Come in, then."

They entered, and were asked into the private, into which Kemp followed them.

Neither Sir Sydney nor Jack took any notice of him, and he pretended to be very much engaged in admiring the charms of a young lady who officiated as barmaid.

When Jack's back was turned, the barmaid took up a newspaper and very dextrously pinned it to his coat collar.

Two or three people came in and began to laugh.

First of all the merriment was subdued, then it degenerated into a loud guffaw.

Turning round, Jack exclaimed:

"What on earth are these fellows laughing at?"

"Country bumpkins will laugh at anything," answered Sir Sydney.

Kemp approached the mantelpiece with a cigar in his mouth and a piece of paper in his hand.

A small fire burned in the grate, more to keep a kettle boiling than because the weather was cold.

"If you don't want all the fire, you fellows," he exclaimed, "perhaps you will kindly let me get a light."

Sir Sydney moved a little, but Jack did not stir.

Kemp bent down, and putting his arm between them, lighted his cigar, but at the same time managed to set fire to the paper pinned to Jack's back.

"Thank you," he said and withdrew.

A brief space elapsed.

Suddenly Sir Sydney exclaimed:

"Curious smell of fire, isn't there?"

"So I thought," replied Jack.

"Smoke too. Wonder where it is."

"Ask the barmaid," said Jack.

"I say Miss," exclaimed Sir Sydney, "is there anything burning on your premises?"

The barmaid looked round and replied:

"I think your friend is on fire."

"On fire?"

"Yes."

At this moment Jack experienced an unpleasant sensation about the regions of his legs. His calves were unpleasantly warm.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I'm hot."

"Why, who the deuce has done this?" said Sir Sydney. "There is a burning newspaper fastened to your back, and your gown and coat tails are smoking like mad."

"Send for the engine," suggested the barmaid.

"Pull it off, somebody!" cried Jack.

He grew alarmed, and ran wildly about.

The more he moved the faster the flames burned. Kemp with difficulty refrained from laughing.

In his terror Jack ran into the street, and very swiftly Sir Sydney ran after him, and after tearing off the paper, forced him on his back in the gutter, down which some dirty water was running.

"You'll be all right directly, old man," he exclaimed.

"How are the legs?"

"Warmish," replied Jack.

He rose, and Sir Sydney surveyed the damage.

"Baga rather burnt," he said; "coat-tails ditto, body of coat injured by water, ditto gown, cap unhurt having rolled into rain. Uninsured."

"Who did it?" asked Jack.

"Query," said Sir Sydney.

Jack found himself the center of an admiring crowd.

"Hurrah, boys! here's another guy!" exclaimed a townsman.

There was a roar of laughter.

"Better erect another martyrs' memorial," said a second.

"He's Cranmer, come to be burnt over again," shouted a third.

Jack was getting wild.

Sir Sydney saw this, and said:

"Come inside."

"Hanged if I do. I'll have it out of somebody," replied Jack.

"You must pitch into me first, then," replied Dawson, dragging him forcibly into the house.

"Let go, Dawson," said Jack, when inside the bar.

"I won't be mauled and messed like this by anyone."

"It's only his Dawson," replied the baronet, coaxingly. "He don't mind his Dawson, does he?"

"Don't be a fool. Where's Kemp? He knows something about this, I'll swear."

"Of course; Kemp was the only man in the bar. He must have done it; I'll swear I didn't. I hate those practical jokes."

"If I thought you would lower yourself to such a thing, I'd never speak to you again, that's all," said Jack savagely.

"Perhaps I should survive it, but I take my dick it wasn't me. Did his angry passions rise, and get the better of him?"

"I am wild," replied Jack.

"Enough to make you."

"Let's get back. Kemp's sloped, I expect, for I don't see him."

"He's wise," replied Sir Sydney. "Hold hard a minute; I haven't paid. What have we had?"

"Two glasses of bitter," replied Jack.

The barmaid had discreetly vanished, as well as Kemp.

Only a boy was at the bar.

"Now then, stupid," exclaimed Sir Sydney; "wake up, stupid; I don't know your other name."

"What is it, sir?" asked the boy.

"Two bitters. Catch," said Sir Sydney, who threw him a sixpence.

"That's right, sir," said the boy. "Bitters is three-pence to Oxford gents in a private bar."

"Bismarcked again," answered Sir Sydney. "But no matter. Give me that sixpence back, boy. It was a bad one."

"Duffer, sir? I thought it was thinnish," said the boy, unsuspectingly, handing back the coin.

Dawson put it in his pocket.

"We shall pay when we are passing," he said. "However, you will have your revenge in two stomach-aches, for the beer was beastly bad."

The boy stared blankly at him.

"Where's my parcel?" asked Jack, looking around him.

"What parcel?"

"Why, May's; the one we went to the station for."

They looked everywhere for it, but it was gone.

"What a nuisance," said Jack. "I've lost the parcel. Perhaps some of those fellows at the bar sneaked it while I was on fire."

"More unlikely things than that have happened in this sublimity."

"Bother your sublimity spheres," interrupted Jack.

"What shall I say to May?"

"Tell him it was a plant of Kemp's, which I believe is really was."

"Do you?"

"I do, indeed."

"Blaze that fellow," said Jack, "I should like to

give him what for. It was like his infernal cheek to set me on fire, if he did do it."

"Who else could?"

"It must have been while he lighted his cigar."

"No doubt," replied Sir Sydney.

"I must tell May how it happened, and if there was anything very valuable in the parcel, I will pay him for it. Can't say more than that, can I?"

"No; if the fellow is a gentleman, he will see it in a moment."

"Will you come with me to his rooms?" asked Jack.

"No, thanks. Kindly excuse me. Not a man I want to know at all."

"Please yourself."

"You'd better re-gown, and put on another pair of bags," laughed Sir Sydney.

"I will, when I get back to the college. Come along," replied Jack.

They walked back together.

Jack was not in the best of tempers, and when he got to his rooms he took off his boots and threw them at Monday's head, because he got between him and the light.

"What um throw um boots, sars," asked Monday.

"Want to see which are the hardest, um boot or um head?"

"Get out," replied Jack. "I'm in a nasty temper."

Monday retired, rubbing his head, and Jack prepared to go to Gentle May's room by himself.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPOSURE.

A SHORT time after the scene in the hotel Kemp made his way into Gentle May's room.

He had something carefully hidden under his arm and covered with his gown.

May was evidently waiting for him, as he got up eagerly from his seat, and exclaimed:

"Well, did it come off all right?"

"Beautifully," replied Kemp.

"How did you manage it?"

"Easily enough. As I thought, they came into the hotel near the station, and I began to play my little game."

"Where is the parcel?"

"Here," replied Kemp, throwing it on the table.

May hastily took it up and hid it away in a drawer.

"Only a flat-iron and a couple of horses' shoes," he exclaimed, with a laugh, and in a very different manner from that he usually assumed.

"It doesn't matter," answered Kemp, also laughing.

"Jewelry is heavy when it is made of pure gold, and as long as the parcel is heavy, you can swear it contained what you like."

"Go on with your story," replied May.

"I spooned the barmaid awfully. She is a nice little tit, and I rather liked it. I'm on there."

"No, be hanged if you are. She's an old spoon of mine."

"Never mind; we shan't quarrel about her," answered Kemp. "There are plenty of little fillies running about loose, and only wants breaking in. As I was saying, I spooned her, and got her to fasten a newspaper to Harkaway's collar with a pin."

"What was that for?"

"You'll hear directly. Don't be so awfully anxious."

"All right; spin along," replied May, lighting a cigar, and pouring out some beer.

"What's that?" asked Kemp.

"Malt; just fetched from the buttery."

"Give me a pull. I haven't time to drink, and I've pelted along so beastly hard to get up here, that I'm as dry as a ditch in summer."

May pushed the tankard over to him, and he drank heartily.

"Feel better?" asked May. "I do after a good beer, always."

"Stones better," answered Kemp. "Well, when I saw this done, I went behind Mr. Harkaway to light a cigar, at a little bit of fire there was to boil the kettle, and in doing so I set the paper in a blaze."

"What a lark! Wasn't there a chylke?"

"Rather. Dawson was with him, and when Harkaway ran into the street in a funk, he put him in the gutter."

"Whereupon you sloped with the plunder?"

"Exactly."

"And let them fight it out."

"You're right, my pippin," answered Kemp. "And now fork out the chips. I've earned them."

May gave him four five-pound notes.

"Twenty quid," he said; "that's what we agreed for, isn't it?"

"To a brown; thanks," replied Kemp, storing the money away in his trousers pocket, as if it had been cigarette paper.

"What will Harkaway do?" inquired May, after a slight pause.

"Kick up a shine, I expect."

"With whom?"

"Me. I shall be accused of getting up the disturbance, in which the parcel was lost."

"You are very much alarmed at that, of course?"

"Very," replied Kemp, smiling.

"I know what I shall do, and if I don't make it hot for him, I'll—"

There was a knock at the door, which Kemp had inadvertently left open.

"By Jove!" said Kemp. "There he is!"

"I wish you were out of it. But it can't be helped. Stand by me," replied May, turning a shade paler.

The next moment Jack entered the room.

"Perhaps I am intruding?"

"Not at all," replied May.

"I was not aware Mr. Kemp was a friend of yours."

"Quite a recent acquaintance, I assure you."

"Is it an offense for me to know a fellow with whom

you are on terms of intimacy?" asked Kemp, insolently.

"I don't wish to talk to you at present, therefore, oblige me by drying up," replied Jack.

Kemp walked to the window, and putting his hands in his pockets, began to whistle.

"How's your toothache?" asked Jack.

"Better, thanks. Have you got the stuff?"

"No, I forgot it. Awfully sorry."

"But you have my parcel, I hope. Ma sent me some very valuable jewelry in it, and I want to make a few presents to friends who have been kind to me, yourself among the number," said May.

"I got it, and unfortunately lost it."

Gentle May started from his chair.

"Lost it!" he exclaimed. "Oh, what will ma say? Oh, Mr. Harkaway, you cannot have lost it!"

"I tell you I have."

"Impossible. What will ma say? Dear ma! she will be so annoyed," continued May.

"Listen to me. This is how it happened," said Jack, as he related all that had occurred.

May remained silent, kicking his feet about restlessly.

"If there is anything valuable in the parcel, and you will tell me the amount, I will gladly pay you," said Jack, at length.

"A hundred pounds would not cover my loss. Oh, Mr. Harkaway, I am sorry for you, but I must tell the police," replied May.

"Sorry for me? Why?"

"The circumstances are so suspicious."

"What the deuce do you mean?" said Jack, all the blood coming into his face.

"I told you the parcel was valuable in my note."

"Well."

"And you live in a fast set."

"Hang me if I take you meaning," replied Jack.

"I don't say so, but there's ill-natured people who would say you—stole the jewelry," said May.

This was more than Jack could stand.

"You contemptible little humbug!" he said. "I'll have your life. How dare you say such a thing to me? How dare you?"

He rushed at him, seized him by the neck, and shook him like a rat.

Each time he shook him he repeated:

"How dare you?—how dare you?"

"Oh, don't, please, don't! Ma said I was not strong enough to fight," gasped Gentle May.

Kemp advanced in a threatening attitude.

"Let him alone," he exclaimed.

Jack eyed him.

"Did you hear what he said?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Am I not justified in shaking the little beast?"

"No. He was more justified in what he said," said Kemp.

"Oh, was he? Well, I'll polish you off first. I've got an account of long standing to settle with you," answered Jack.

He released May, who sank into a chair, and began to cry.

"Oh," he said, "what would ma say, and Bobby and Tommy, and all my sisters? What a disgraceful scene, in my rooms, too!"

Jack threw out his left, and Kemp rolled over on to the sofa.

"Come on," said Jack. "I'll give you something to remember, Mr. Kemp. You don't perform upon me for nothing, I can tell you."

Kemp was rather dizzy from the effects of the blow.

"I'm not a prize-fighter," he said.

"Nor I."

"Let the little fellow alone. A strong man like you ought to be ashamed to hit a little one like May."

"Is a little man to be cheeky, just because he is small?" asked Jack.

Kemp made no answer.

"If you won't fight, take that," said Jack, kicking him, "and sit still while I perform the same operation upon this contemptible cur, who is more so in my eyes than ever since I find he knows a man of your stamp."

"My stamp?" said Kemp, retiring again to the window.

"Yes. Everyone in Oxford knows what you are, from the dons to the scouts."

"Oh!" groaned May, "that I should ever live to witness such a scene."

"I haven't begun yet," answered Jack. "Come out, you whining hound. You'll tell me I stole your parcel, will you? Come out!"

May refused to move.

Jack made another dash at him, and seized him by the hair.

To his surprise he fell backwards.

Instead of clutching hair, he had simply pulled off a light wig.

In an instant he was on his feet.

Before him stood, or rather crouched, in an attitude of abject terror, not Gentle May, but Frank Davis.

"Davis!" he cried. "Is this another conspiracy? Kicked out of the university, have you dared to disguise yourself and enter under a false name?"

There was a dead silence.

"This accounts for Mr. Kemp being here, and the alleged loss of the valuable parcel," cried Jack. "Well, you're a nice pair of beauties, anyhow; but, you see, you are not a match for me."

Still neither spoke.

"Wanted to make me out a thief, did you?" continued Jack, between his teeth—"wanted to have me accused of a robbery, eh? Clever idea, but you're licked, my boys. You didn't do it badly, Mr. Davis. You took me in as Mr. May, and I'll compliment you on your acting, but you went a little too far with your humble servant."

"Since you have found me out," said Davis, "I have only to beg for your mercy."

"What do you expect?"

"He came in through the door, walked round the room, and how he went away I don't know, for I faint!"

"It's all through reading too hard, Jack," replied Harvey. "You were the best ear in the eight, the best in the eleven, and your beastly ambition wants you to be first in the class list."

"No. It's not that."

"I'm satisfied it is; and, before I ruin my health, I'll see the classical tripos at the bottom of the sea. You can't be everything."

"I don't want to be," said Jack.

"You do. You want to be an Admirable Crichton."

"Not at all," replied Jack, feebly.

"You're a born scholar, a rowing man, a cricketer, and all that sort of thing, but you are not fit for reading. I want it easy, and I want it when you go to the schools."

Monday arrived with a bowl of bishop, and both the young men paid partial attention to it, Jack's spirits revived under its genial influence.

After breakfast, Harvey, after smoking a rather strong cigar, felt sleepy, and said good-night, while Jack continued to read Herodotus.

"Get that old Greek, Herodotus," said Harvey, "and turn it into English. I want to be a scholar."

"Then I want what I can't get. My head aches like a hammer."

"Come down and play at foot-ball, or do something."

"I'll tie a wet towel around my head, and go on sleeping."

"All right—tata! We are going to have a hard frost, and I'll have you out as soon as the ice bears," said Harvey.

Jack went on reading, turning to his dictionary every now and then, and at last wetted a towel in the hand-basin, and tied it around his head.

It must have been twelve o'clock when he heard a knock.

He got up, he saw the door open, and Frank Davis entered, rather glided into the room.

His movements were like those of the ghost in the "American Brothers."

Eyes fixed and glassy, a wound on his forehead, which was stained with blood, the doctor had just entered the room.

He looked at Jack, and went to the window.

"Who and what are you?" almost screamed Jack.

There was no reply.

A cold sweat broke out all over him.

Mocking laughter seemed to come from various parts of the room.

Trembling like a leaf, Jack watched the apparition with all-devouring sight.

It made the circuit of the room and regained the door.

Then it fixed its snake-like eyes upon Jack, raised its arms threateningly, and vanished.

Harvey sat in his bed all night, and for a time lost all consciousness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GHOST ON THE ICE.

It was clear to all Jack's friends that he was far from well.

They put it down to work and close study, but Jack knew that he was haunted, and the impression grew upon his mind.

A day or two after the apparition we have described, Jack walked down to the house of the first doctor in Oxford.

He was admitted to the consultation-room, the door was shut, and he was alone with the doctor, who was a man of the most polished and refined of the profession.

"What a fine doctor, Mr. Holloway," said Jack, looking at the doctor's card. "I have heard of you, I have heard of you."

"I don't know any more of the world," said Jack.

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His face went ashy pale, his frame quivered, and with trembling hands he pointed in the direction of a little window, partly covered with a gauze blind, which looked into the street, about five feet above the level of the pavement.

If a passer-by chose to be rude enough, he could just look over the top of the blind into the physician's study.

"What is the matter?" asked the doctor, alarmed at his visitor's manner.

"There!" cried Jack. "I saw it again."

"Where?"

"At the window. He was staring at me, as he always does, with his great black eyes; oh, I cannot bear it, he haunts me every where."

Doctor Angus rose, and went to the window.

There was no one there, and but few people in the street.

"Singular case of delusion," he said.

"But I saw him," persisted Jack.

The doctor shook his head.

"Do you think I am mistaken?" asked Jack.

"I'm sure of it. You must leave off reading; go more into the open air. I think, if I am not mistaken, you are one of the shining lights of our university, Mr. Harkaway. I seem to be familiar with your name."

"I am in the eleven and eight," answered Jack.

"Exactly. I thought so; now take my advice. Go out more; you shall have some medicine of a tonic character, and I hope to see you better soon. Give me a call in a week's time."

Jack slipped a guinea into the doctor's hand, which was his fee, thanked him, and went away.

He was not at all satisfied with the interview.

To have a fixed delusion in one's mind at his age is not pleasant.

Nor is it agreeable to fancy that you have continually a dead man about you.

The weather continued very cold.

Every night there was a hard black frost, and the dull, heavy sky and easterly wind promised a long continuance of cold weather.

One morning, Harvey burst into Jack's room after breakfast.

"Harkaway!" he cried, jumping about like a madman.

"What a noise, Harvey!" asked Jack. "Can't you stand still, instead of going about like a teetotum?"

"I can't be quiet," replied Harvey, "and I don't say so."

"Does it bear? I am glad of that."

"So am I, old fellow. We'll have some skating to-day."

"Where?"

"I've got an invitation from Holloway. You know Holloway, don't you?"

"Yes. His people live close by, don't they?"

"That's it. There is some splendid ornamental water in his governor's park, and we shall be all to ourselves there. The dog-cart is coming to fetch us at eleven."

"Has he asked me, too?" inquired Jack.

"Yes. I have been put you in the party."

"Monday," called Jack, showing more animation than his face had displayed for some time past.

"What um matter now, sare," replied Monday, coming into the room.

"Get my skates; rub them up well with a bit of sand-paper, and oil the straps."

Monday was shivering with cold.

"What um matter now, sare," he said. "It's a jolly cold here."

"That's the beauty of it, you chuckled-headed old cod-fish," replied Harvey, laughing.

"Monday him got on three flannel shirt, two pair of trousers, and four waistcoats, but yet um not warm."

"You extravagant fellow. A young woman would have got on with a single shirt and a pair of trousers."

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"You extravagant fellow. A young woman would have got on with a single shirt and a pair of trousers."

Travers and Emily stepped out, followed by two boys and the same number of girls.

"Emily, my darling," exclaimed Jack, shaking her hand, "this is really a pleasure, and the more charming because it was unexpected."

The Misses Holloway looked superciliously at Emily. They could see in a moment that Harkaway was engaged to her, and they had particularly asked their brother to bring some nice eligible men with him.

The Misses Holloway wanted to get married.

Most young ladies do.

"I am so glad to see you, dear Jack," answered Emily.

"But how ill you look!"

"Do I?"

"Yes, indeed. Have you been working too hard lately?"

"Not that I know of," replied Jack. "It is nothing."

He did not like to tell her he was haunted, as the intelligence would have alarmed her.

Presently everyone went to the ice, which was in the center of a beautiful park.

The ice at one end had been broken up for cattle, and as the water was very deep there, the skaters were warned to keep away from that part.

Several hours were spent very agreeably.

The ladies enjoyed themselves immensely, and Jack found great fun in teaching Emily to skate.

It was growing dark, and Mr. Holloway proposed that the ladies should return and dress for dinner.

Jack, Harvey, and Holloway remained, determined to have another spin before they left off.

"I'm rather cold," said Jack. "I've been skating hard, and I think I'll have a heater."

"Cut along, I'll lead you a chivey," said Harvey.

"No, I'll go by myself; I'm not a steam-engine like you."

"Bye, bye," said Harvey, who spun off like a shot.

Jack went off slowly at first, but increased his pace as he proceeded, and his blood warmed with the exercise.

The darkness increased.

Innumerable pine and larch trees lined the lake, and cast their funereal shadows upon the shining slippery ice.

Everything looked dismal and melancholy.

There was a clear course in the center of the lake, of about two miles from end to end.

The ice was in excellent condition, being very little out up, and as smooth as glass.

Suddenly he saw a figure before him.

He thought it was Harvey.

"Spin along, old man," he said, in high spirits now.

"Bet you a sov. I catch you."

Putting on his best pace, he flew over the ice.

The figure before him made no reply.

Skating as fast as he could, Jack tried to overtake the man in front of him.

He forgot that he was nearing the dangerous portion of the lake.

The part of which he had been warned, where the ice was broken for the cattle, where the depth was twenty feet or more.

The blinding snow dashed into his face, but he still rushed on.

"I will see who it is," he said between his set teeth.

With a fierce determination he urged himself to his highest speed, like a steam-engine under pressure of steam.

All at once the figure turned round.

Jack was surprised, for although he had only an imperfect view of the features, he certainly thought it looked like Davis.

"Man, ghost, or devil," he ejaculated, "I will see who you are. I will have no more tricks played on me."

The figure, however, was by this time many yards ahead, and turning towards the other skaters, mingled with them and was lost to sight.

Jack followed.

He did not think of danger; he forgot the warnings that had been given him, until a great black gulf yawned straight in front of him.

Then it crossed his mind that he was close upon the broken ice.

Digging his heels down, he tried to stop himself.

It was too late.

The ice gave away beneath him with a crash, and he was plunged into the deep water, which eagerly swallowed him in its frigid embrace.

Jack, then, lay at the bottom of the lake, and he gave himself up for lost.

It was not easy to swim in cold water in the middle of winter after a week's hard frost, when you have a heavy coat on, a heavy pair of boots, and a heavy pair of trousers.

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He thought of the merry party at the hall, which he had hoped to join, the meeting at dinner, and the round game at cards in the evening.

"Oh! it is hard to die like this," he muttered—"if I must die, after all I have gone through. But here goes for another try."

He clutched the treacherous ice, and was only rewarded by breaking off several pieces instead of getting a firm footing.

His senses gradually began to leave him.

Suddenly he heard a voice exclaim:

"Hullo, Jack, where are you? Hullo-o-u."

It was Harvey.

"Jack was so far gone now that he could speak only with difficulty.

"Hullo," he answered. "Dick, come here. I'm in the water."

Swift as lightning Harvey skated to the spot.

He knew his friend was in danger.

"Where are you?" he exclaimed, pausing doubtfully in the snow storm.

"Here; mind how you come. I'm in the water. Gently, for Heaven's sake!" answered Jack, making a last effort.

Harvey went down on his hands and knees and crawled to the place from whence the voice proceeded. Soon strong arms had grasped him and laid him on the ice.

Soon a loving voice whispered words of encouragement to him.

But Jack heard them not; he had become insensible.

When he came to himself he was lying in a warm bed, a light burned on a table, and a bright fire was blazing in the grate.

Harvey was by his side, and when the eyes opened he said:

"That's right, old man; knew you would be yourself soon."

"How did it happen?" asked Jack, trying to remember.

"Drink this," said Harvey, offering him some wine and water hot.

Presently it all came back to him.

The figure, the fall in the water, his despair, and Harvey's friendly voice.

"Dick, you saved my life," he said. "But how did you find me out?"

"I saw you start for a spin, for I wasn't far off," replied Harvey, "and followed you. At first I kept up with you, afterwards you went at such a lick, I was left behind, and lost you. What made you put such a spurt on?"

"I saw a figure I thought was Davis. I resolved to make certain, and followed. He swerved round all at once. I went on and fell in the water, and should have been drowned had it not been for you."

"All I can say is, that Kemp and Davis are very artful beggars, and it is just on the cards that the Singapore fellow is not dead yet," said Harvey, with a smile. "But never mind, you're all right now. We've kept some dinner hot for you, and Emily says she hopes to see you in the drawing-room as soon as possible."

"How about the dogs?"

"Oh, we've found some. The bag may be a little big, but the coat I think will be a lovely fit. Jump out."

Jack began to dress himself.

He was feeling all right again.

Seizing Harvey's hand, he exclaimed:

"I can never thank you enough, Dick. It would have been horrible to drown like that, and it was touch and go."

"I am only too happy to have come up when I did. What a night it is, to be sure. Snow falling in torrents. We're not to go back to-night. The Holloways have got beds for us."

Jack finished dressing, and went down to the drawing-room, where he had a good dinner, and presently joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT TO THE "VAGS."

EVERY ONE at Mr. Holloway's, congratulated Jack upon his narrow escape from drowning.

He was very grave.

Emily had never told him of her return.

The ladies talked the night through with some music, and after that there was a round game at cards.

Then Mr. Harvey proposed a card-party, which went off very well, till about three, after a quarrel, he said a word or two, and went and sat down on the sofa.

Emily missed Harvey but did not say so.

Harvey in vain asked her to be his partner.

"Please excuse me," she replied. "I must go and take a little walk."

"You look gloomy, dear Jack," said she. "You have been working too hard. I must get Mr. Travers to let me tell you in the carriage and take you out. Why not let me take you to the Oxford street eleven, which is a new place for them on their own ground? That will be a treat."

"I will," answered Jack. "Tell me all the news, Harvey. It is a long time since we had a chat; talk to me. I don't think me selfish for keeping you away from the house."

"I am going to dance with you, dear," she said.

He pressed her hand tenderly.

"I have some news for you," she said, smiling.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The Duke of Wellington is dead."

"Dead!" repeated Jack, in astonishment.

"Yes, indeed. He was with his yacht in the Mediterranean, and was drowned while bathing. His widow is handsomely provided for, and comes home in a few days to stay at her father's. Fancy being a

duchess with ever so much money a year, at quite a young age."

"We shall not be sorry, for she never loved him."

"No; she liked you. Don't go after the widow, Jack," said Emily, laughing.

"Is it likely? Oh! Emily, how can you say—?"

"Hush!" interrupted Emily. "It was only nonsense. Be a good boy and try and brighten up a little. I am not afraid of the widow, dear."

Towards the close of the evening Jack recovered his spirits, much to Emily's delight.

The next day the party broke up. Jack and Harvey were driven to Oxford by their friend Mr. Holloway, and Emily returned with Mrs. Travers to that lady's house.

Jack found Sir Sydney installed in his rooms.

Monday was mixing him some seltzer and brandy, while Buster was giving him a light for one of Harkaway's choice Havanas.

"Ah, dear boy," said Sir Sydney, with a languid air. "Glad to see you. Making myself at home."

"So I perceive," answered Jack.

"Fact is, I'm getting used up," continued Sir Sydney. "What with cards till daylight, morning chapel, lectures, and the rest of it, my constitution won't stand it. I wish the dons would send me down for a year, so that I might recruit in the country."

"Draw it a little milder."

"Can't, my dear fellow. I was born to go fast, and it's the pace that kills."

"Have a quiet evening with me. I'm reading."

"For goodness sake don't talk about reading," interrupted the baronet; "I hate grinding, and never was a sap."

"Lucky for you that you were born with a spoon in your mouth."

"That's just the opinion I have come to. When I am one and twenty, my guardians can't keep me out of my tin, and I shall occupy myself in the pleasant amusement of seeing how quickly I can spend it; let the poor beggars work, I don't mean to."

Turning to Monday, he added:

"My black friend, in you I recognize a man and a brother. Perform the Christian operation of giving me some B. in my S."

Monday poured a fresh quantity of brandy in the seltzer.

"I am better, let the fact be written in gold," said Sir Sydney. "I say, Harkaway—redoubtable athlete that thou art—strong man, tell me if you can make a speech?"

"Why?"

"Because to-night you must come with me to the Vags."

"And what are the Vags?"

"Allow me to enlighten your darkness," replied Sir Sydney. "The Vags is an institution. Certain members of the university are disgusted with the dry nature of the debates at the Union, and they have formed an anti-union society or discussion club, where everybody can quarrel to his heart's content."

"Oh, it is a debating club," said Jack.

"Exactly. We call ourselves the Vagrants or Vags. Our president is your worthy friend, Mr. Mole, to whose genius we owe the origin of the society."

"Is Mole one of you?"

"Did I not say so?"

"I thought he was living in the country with his wife and children."

"So he is, but that does not prevent him feeling bored, like many other married men, and wishing to spend his evenings abroad."

At this moment Mr. Mole entered the room, rather unsteady in his gait, and looking as if he had given way to drinking.

"Glad to see you, sir," said Harkaway. "Take a chair."

"I will take two," replied Mr. Mole, sitting down on one and putting his legs on another; "the cold weather fatigues me. Have you any of that alcoholic stimulant called brandy?"

"Certainly. Monday, attend to Mr. Mole. How's your wife sir?"

"Awful, Harkaway," replied Mr. Mole; "as I am a Christian gentleman, a scholar, and a man of education, I declare she is beyond endurance."

"And the blessed infants, sir?"

"Name them not. If ever there were imps of darkness sent into the world to plague an unfortunate individual—but I will say no more," replied Mr. Mole, with a groan.

"Don't mind Dawson, sir. He's nobody—tell us all about it."

"Why should I? Look at my expressive countenance, my grief-worn face, my locks already tinged with grey—do they not tell a tale? Were it not for the pursuits of science, I should seek the dismal doom of the committed suicide."

"What is this scientific affair you have in hand, sir? Lots of fellows have been talking about it."

"Time will show," answered Mr. Mole. "I shall show, and 'Up in a balloon, boys, with me, I long for the wings of a dove, so that I might fly and be at rest.'"

"A nice sort of dove you'll be," said Sir Sydney, "if you don't fly away, and leave your children charitable to the world."

"When I address my remarks to you, sir," answered Mr. Mole, "I should be grateful for your opinion, but not before."

"Sorry I spoke," said Sir Sydney, throwing away the stump of his cigar.

"You come down to my little club," continued Mr. Mole, angrily, "the club that I have founded, and do all in your power to create a disturbance. To-night, sir, I shall have you formally expelled."

"Who's going to do it?" asked the baronet.

"That will be only a detail. When I have the authority of the club for your expulsion, rest assured you will not be long a vagrant."

"Now don't be unkind, Mole," said Sir Sydney. "I never saw such a fellow to cut up rough. Here am I, the life and soul of your meeting, and you want to kick me out. Have you got any one who can do a cat-call as well as I can?"

"That's just it."

"Or bark like a dog, with a yelp equal to mine?"

"That's what I complain of."

"Or bellow like a bull, like unto this child?" continued Sir Sydney. "If you aren't sociable, I shall get up an opposition to you. The 'Vagrants' meet at the Mitre; I will take a room at the 'Randolph,' and start the 'Broken-hearted Club.'"

"What will that be like?" asked Jack.

"Rule I, shall run as follows: Any one who laughs, smiles, or looks in any way happy, shall be fined half a crown."

"I shall be eligible for election in that club," remarked Mr. Mole.

A glance at his sorrowful countenance made the young men laugh.

"You ought to be constituted a life member at once, sir," said Jack.

"Rule II," continued Sir Sydney, "shall enact that a man who cannot do the briny, *id est*, shed a tear when called upon by the president, shall be kicked till he does. By Rule III, every member shall belong to a burial club, and have a ready-made coffin under his bed."

"I say," cried Jack, "you are enough to frighten anyone. Talk about something more lively."

Sir Sydney was full of his new idea, the "Broken-hearted Club," and went to his rooms to draw up a prospectus and rules, declaring that he would start it, and that it should become one of the institutions of the college.

Mr. Mole dined with Jack, and told him confidentially how miserable he was with Ambonia, whose temper was worse than ever.

"Look here," said Mole, putting his hand to his head.

Jack saw nothing but a bare, closely cropped surface, like that of a man recovered from a severe fever.

"I have had my head shaved and wear a wig, because she used to pull the hair out by the handfuls, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole, putting on his wig.

"Do you wonder I am spending part of my modest fortune in building a balloon to explore unknown continents?"

Jack's candid opinion was that Mr. Mole was going mad as fast as he could.

But he did not say so.

In the evening they went to the "Mitre," and found most of the members of the Vagrant Club assembled in a large room.

Mr. Mole took the chair.

"Sit near me, Harkaway," said Sir Sydney, pulling his gown. "I'm going in for a row, to-night."

Jack sat down, and the secretary arose.

"If any member is in arrears with his subscription," he said, "he'd better pay up sharp."

A few half-crowns were tendered, and Mr. Mole got on his legs.

"The question for debate this evening, gentlemen," he said, "is that in the opinion of the house, the proctors should be accompanied by a man beating a drum, so that notice of their approach might be given to the unwary undergraduates and others. It is proposed by Mr. Carden, and seconded by Mr. Harvey."

Tom Carden rose, and said:

"Gentlemen!"

"Order!" cried Sir Sydney. "We have not sung the vagrant anthem."

"Quite right," replied Mr. Mole. "I omitted it. Brother vagrants, follow my lead, if you please."

The anthem was then sung.

It ran as follows:

"I'm a vagrant; thou'rt a vagrant; vagrants too are he and she. We are vagrants; they are vagrants; where are they who would not be?"

This was received with great applause, and Carden continued:

"The abuse of proctorial power in this ancient seat of learning has—"

"A lot you've learnt," said a voice.

"Has, I repeat led to the most disastrous results."

"When were you gated last?" cried a voice.

The president rose to order.

"Really, gentlemen, I must pray for silence," he said.

"Shut up, You're a duffer. Go home to your wife!" cried Sir Sydney.

"I will maintain order!" shouted Mr. Mole, whose voice trembled with passion. "When I accepted this high office, I swore—"

"You'd swear black was white, only you wouldn't believe it, when you got home," answered Jack, in a loud tone.

Allusion to Ambonia caused Mr. Mole to grow more furious.

"Turn him out," said the vagrants.

"Who is the culprit?" asked the president. "This cannot go on."

Jack saw Kemp in a corner, and imitating his voice, said:

"It was I, Mr. President."

"Apologize," replied Mr. Mole, "and we will pass it over. Mr. Kemp will apologize."

"What do you mean?" asked Kemp. "I never spoke."

"Silence for the chair," continued Mr. Mole. "I appeal to you as gentlemen to respect the president."

"You're an old humbug. 'It's my belief you're a humbug,' said the baronet."

Mr. Mole drew a card from his chair, and approached Kemp.

"Did you say I was disguised in liquor?" he asked.
 "I did not say anything," replied Kemp; "but I will say now that you're all a lot of lunatics, and I'm sorry I joined your rotten club. However, you won't see me again."

"Bonnet him," replied Sir Sydney.
 Mr. Mole, in an evil moment for himself, acted upon the advice, and smashed Kemp's hat, which he had just put on, heavily over his eyes.

He had been out skating all day in the country, and had not had time to put on his academical costume.

Kemp hit out, and Mr. Mole rolled over.
 "Row! row!" cried Sir Sydney, pushing against the members, who had crowded round the combatants.

"Back me up, Jack," he added.
 Their united weights caused several men to fall against Mr. Mole, and they were soon struggling in a heap.

Kemp got his hat off, and made a rush through the mob, kicking and hitting right and left.

Jack got a blow on the chest and did not like it.
 "What did you hit me for?" he asked.

"You must take your chance with the rest," replied Kemp. "There would have been no row, if you and Dawson had not got it up."

"I never like to receive a favor without returning it," said Jack; "so there is your punch back again and another to keep it company, by way of interest."

The first blow closed one eye.
 The second dislodged a tooth, which stuck in his throat.

Kemp grew black in the face—seemed in imminent danger of choking.

Sir Sydney Dawson was behind him, and Jack said: "Hit him on the back; he's swallowed a tooth."

"Won't a kick do as well?" replied Sir Sydney.
 "He's one of the blackleg lot."

And he proceeded to kick him vigorously from behind.

The process was not pleasant; but did good, and the tooth went down.

Directly Kemp could breathe, he uttered a growl like a wild beast.

Springing on a chair, he turned the gas out.
 The scene now became one of indescribable confusion.

Mr. Mole's voice was heard, saying:

"Gentlemen, brother vagrants, I am deprived of every breath in my body. Oh! get up! Oh! oh! somebody has put his confounded boot in the pit of my—oh! stomach."

"Go it one? Go it t'other!" said Sir Sydney, delighted at the riot he had created.

"I have a very good one," said Sir Sydney, looking at his watch.

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"All right," replied Harvey.

They proceeded to play, and Jack happened to mention that the Duke of Woodstock was dead.

"Really!" cried Harvey. "Then Hilda is a widow?"

"Of course. Check to your king."

"I always liked that girl," answered Harvey, getting out of check, "and I envied that fool Woodstock when he married her."

"Did you? She is a nice girl, and her governor is awful rich. Why don't you go in for the widow, Dick?"

"The duchess wouldn't look at a poor fellow like me," said Harvey.

"Check again. How careless you are. You must move your bishop to cover your king, and I take your queen," said Jack.

"Do you really think I should have any chance in that quarter?" asked Harvey, after a pause.

"Why not?"

"I wouldn't marry any girl I did not like for her money; but I have always thought I could love Hilda, and I don't mind telling you, Jack, that I have loved her, and do love her now."

"You don't object to widows?"

"Rather like them in this particular instance," replied Harvey.

"Check," said Jack.

"By Jove! that's mate," exclaimed Harvey, after a glance at the board.

"You are thinking of Hilda to-night, and can't play."

"So I am. It would be a fine thing for me to marry Hilda. I have nothing but hard work before me, Jack; not that I am afraid of it, you know; but I'm only up here through the kindness of your father, and there are a lot of us at home. It is as much as the dear old governor can do to get along on his screw in the city."

"Have a try for it, Dick," said Jack. "Do you mind going up to the Corn Market to-night?"

"What for?"

"With a letter of condolence from me to old Manasses. You can ask when the fair Hilda is expected home."

"All right; give me the letter and I'll go," replied Harvey.

While Jack was writing a note to Moses Manasses, commiserating him on the loss of his son-in-law, and hoping that his daughter bore the affliction bravely, some other characters in our story were taking sweet counsel together.

These were Kemp and Hunston.

Kemp, on leaving the "Vaga," had gone to a chemist's to wash his mouth out with alum, and have his eye painted, so as to avoid blackness if possible.

Then he wended his way to a low public-house in the city, and going into the tap-room, found Hunston waiting for him in a secluded corner.

There were only three other occupants in the room; they were smoking long pipes, drinking beer, and talking politics in the loud, defiant, quacking tone which always characterizes the political discussions of tap-room orators.

Consequently the two friends were quite at their ease, for there was no danger of their being overheard.

"You've kept me waiting long enough," growled Hunston, looking at the greasy clock on the mantelpiece.

"I couldn't help it," replied Kemp. "I went to a club called the 'Vaga' for half an hour, because I want to keep in with Harkaway and his set, if I can."

"What's happened? You're hat's smashed, you're lip's swollen, and you've got a mouse on your left peeper. Has there been a row?"

"It's all that infernal Harkaway; he got up a riot, and I got punched. Look here, one of my top teeth is gone."

"Where?"

"I swallowed it. Harkaway knocked it into my throat, and while I was half-choking somebody kindly kicked me till it went down. But don't talk about it. The thing only riles me, and I'll be even with him before I've done."

"He's haunted; let him alone," said Hunston, with a laugh.

"And he looks beastly bad over it," replied Kemp.

"What a lark!"

"It was touch-and-go the ghost didn't drown him the other night at Holloway."

"What a fellow you are to chatter," exclaimed Kemp, angrily. "Haven't I told you a dozen times never to talk unnecessarily?"

"Well, let's go to the business in hand. Are you up to the mark?"

"Bang up. Slap bang up," answered Kemp, "and no nonsense about it. I'm in debt up to my neck everywhere. I owe money to tradesmen, who are dunning my life out of me, and I owe a lot to bill discounters and betting men, who threaten to have me up before the Vice-Chancellor or make me a bankrupt in London."

"You're like me," replied Hunston. "I want to get to the bottom of this, and I'll be even with him before I've done."

"Do you think we shall have any luck?"

"Shall we have a lot of swag? Of course we shall. The old fellow has a heap of money in the house."

"I'll be there."

"When I go to his house with you and Davis, do you think I kept my eyes shut? Not much. I was wide awake. I know where the safe is, and where he keeps his loose cash."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"I'll be there."

"Is that enough for you?"

"Just about enough, and that's all."

"You can have some of mine. I don't want so much as you," replied Hunston. "And now the thing is arranged, I suppose we stop here till they shut up, and then get in at the back of the old fellow's premises."

"Yes, what will you drink?"

"Brandy. That's my liquor. I want a stimulant and mustn't mix my drinks," replied Hunston.

When their wants were supplied, Kemp said reflectively:

"I wish we could fix the robbery upon Harkaway in some manner. Couldn't we put some jewelry in his rooms, stolen from the house, and send the police to search?"

"We will think the matter over," replied Hunston.

"Have you got the masks?"

"Yes, black ones, and some tools to get in with. I have forgotten nothing."

In this sort of conversation they passed the remainder of the evening, waiting for midnight, at which lone hour, they reckoned the house they intended to rob would be quiet, and they could pursue their rascally purpose without interruption.

Meanwhile Harvey had gone with Jack's letter of condolence to Moses Manasses' house, and was admitted by a neat-looking servant, who, recognizing Harvey as a friend of the family, said with a smile:

"I'm glad you came to-night, sir."

"How is that, Rachel?" he asked.

"Because the duchess returned home this morning rather unexpectedly. We knew she was coming, but we didn't think to see her for a day or two."

Harvey's heart began to beat quickly.

He was ushered into the drawing-room, where the Jew and his daughter were alone together.

"Welcome, Mr. Harvey," said Manasses. "My poor house has not lately been honored by your presence."

"I, too, may be permitted to join my father in an expression of pleasure at seeing you, who are indeed an old friend," exclaimed Hilda.

"You are very good," replied Harvey.

"I came up to-night with a letter from Harkaway, saying how sorry he was to hear of your recent loss. Indeed, we are all deeply grieved."

"You have heard of it?"

"Yes, from Emily. She had a note from you."

"It was very sudden," said Hilda. "Poor Woodstock was bathing in the Mediterranean, and being seized with a cramp, sank instantly. My married life was a very short one. Scarcely what is called the honeymoon over, when I found myself a widow."

"In the full possession of all your matchless charms," said Harvey.

Hilda looked curiously at him, and with a woman's quickness of perception, so read his expression as to let her eyes drop suddenly.

Up to the present time she had never suspected that she excited anything more than a friendly interest in him.

But this was not the time to think or speak of love.

She was in mourning for her husband, and during the remainder of the evening she returned his gaze coldly whenever their eyes met.

"Hilda is telling me all about her adventures in foreign lands," said the Jew. "I have not seen her since the illustrious alliance she contracted, and if the details will not be unpleasant to you, Mr. Harvey, I shall be glad if you will spend what is left of the evening with us."

"Delighted, I'm sure," answered Harvey.

"You speak of my grand marriage," said Hilda. "Grandeur does not bring happiness."

"Your title, however, introduced you into the best society."

"What of that? It is true that I have dined with kings and queens, and that my dresses and jewelry excelled those of the most exalted station at court, but I was not happy."

"Incredible!" exclaimed the Jew, joining his hands together. "Father Abraham; is it possible that I have a child above the vanities of life?"

"I assure you, father," replied Hilda, "that I am more at my ease in this dear old familiar room, with you by my side, and Mr. Harvey with us, than I was when the duke and I were the guests of the King and Queen of Greece, and all Athens gave fetes in our honor."

"You make my heart rejoice, child. I thought your prosperity would make you ashamed of your parentage, and despise your father."

"Never! I shall not use my title. To every one whether at home or traveling, I shall be plain Mrs. Woodstock."

"Then shall my old age glide pleasantly to the grave, and my heart be at rest?" said the Jew.

He raised his eyes to heaven, and his lips moved as with a pious offering.

"Thanks be to the Lord of Israel," he continued, "My heart is in thee, Hilda. Come hither, my child, and let me kiss thy brow. Of a verity thou art cast in the mould of thy sainted mother."

Little did the aged Jew know, as he pressed his child to his heart, that the fates were busily engaged in cutting the thread of his life.

Far was he from thinking that the weird sisters were gazing upon the glass of life, from which the sand had almost run out.

Midnight clanged from more than one clock in the city.

"So late," said the Jew, "and the night is so dark."

"No more for me," replied Harvey, "I shall be all the same."

"Nay," continued the old man, "I will be the same way for once. We do not have a child to be born every day. In my cellar there is some brandy."

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURE.

At the stroke of midnight, when the weird sisters were gazing upon the glass of life, from which the sand had almost run out, the clock in the city clanged.

Midnight clanged from more than one clock in the city.

"So late," said the Jew, "and the night is so dark."

"No more for me," replied Harvey, "I shall be all the same."

"Nay," continued the old man, "I will be the same way for once. We do not have a child to be born every day. In my cellar there is some brandy."

"I'll be there."

The weather was very mild, more like spring than winter, and he frequently sculled on the river in his boat.

One day he was quietly going down towards Illey, thinking over his future prospects.

Davis was dead.

Of Hunston, he saw nothing; and for the time, Kemp seemed disposed to let him alone.

But Kemp was in reality nothing better than a creeping snake.

At any moment he might wake up and bite.

Suddenly something caught Jack round the neck, flung him forward in the boat, and his sculls were dashed from his hands.

At first he thought he had run up against a barge.

But when he had picked himself up, he could see nothing whatever.

A burst of ringing laughter from the bank made him turn his eyes in that direction.

He saw a young man standing by a stump of a pollard willow, and almost level with his waist was a stout cord.

This was stretched across the river, and fastened on each side to the branch of a tree.

It was the cord which had caught him by the neck and thrown him.

"I say you, sir!" he exclaimed, angrily; "what do you mean by setting traps like this for people?"

The young man who wore the college cap and gown, looked rather than ever.

"I shall have to knock some of the grinning out of you!" cried Jack.

"That would puzzle you at any time, be jabbers; but just now more than ever," was the reply.

"Why?"

"Because you have lost your sculls, and are drifting down the lasher."

This was true.

For the first time, Jack realized his position.

He had lost both sculls, and was perfectly helpless, while, ahead of him, he could hear the sullen roar of the weir.

"Sit still like a good boy, and don't prowl any more," said the stranger and on the word of a gentleman, I will get you out of the mess."

"How?"

"My boat is moored lower down. I'll get in, pick up your sculls, and apologize; will that do for you?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "though I don't half like it."

"Of course you don't," said the stranger with another laugh; "do you feel sore, eh?"

"Rather, you've made my jaws ache. I have half a mind to swim over to you just now and punch your head."

"My dear fellow you wouldn't be in it with me. I am the best light-weight out; you couldn't lick me, if you tried for a week."

The measured sounds of oars was heard coming down the river.

"Hallo!" said the practical joker. "Here are some more putty-heads coming."

"It's one of the college eights," said Jack; "cut the cord."

"Not I."

"You will swamp the lot."

"All the better," replied the stranger.

"He ran quickly down the bank, jumped into his boat—picked up Jack's sculls, gave them to him, and did it all in less than a minute."

"Now!" he cried. "Pull quickly on, and lay under the bank with me; we must see the fun, and then get into the lock before they can twig us. Eight to two and the coxswain are odds which I don't mane to face."

Though he did not like it, Jack did as he was told, for the stranger had a way with him of making those he came in contact with obey him.

They hid under the bank.

On came the eight with a steady swinging stroke of thirty-six a minute.

"It's the St. Aldate's boat," said the stranger.

"So it is, by all that's funny. There's Tom Carden."

Before Jack had time to say any more, the sharp eye of the coxswain had spotted the rope.

"Back water all!" he called loudly.

"Back water all!"

The rope went taut, two, three and four, pitching them into the river, while five, six and seven were sent sprawling over their stretchers.

Tom Carden was spared, as the impetus of the boat was on him.

Jack looked up and down in surprise.

"What's happened?"

"What's happened?"

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"What's happened?"

"Yes, I'm a Maudlin man. My name is Pat O'Rafferty, and as every one have a rayson for living, my rayson d'etre is to play practical jokes. I live for fun and now who are you?"

"Jack Harkaway," was the reply.

"What the great oar, the athlete, the pride of the Varsity, who is making all the muscular Christians wape because he won't row again this year: the converted mass of muscles, who is going to court the muses, and turn rayding man? I have heard of you my friend."

"One must read a little," answered Jack in jest.

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, continued O'Rafferty. "Here we are at locks. Wake the man up, will you?"

"Locks?" cried Jack, "lo-lo-locks-a-s."

A few minutes satisfied to carry them through, and they settled down for a steady row, which continued for about a mile.

Suddenly O'Rafferty stopped.

"I've had enough of this," he exclaimed; "suppose we have a quiet chat."

"I shouldn't mind a beer and some bread and cheese," answered Jack.

O'Rafferty looked round and saw on his left a very neat-looking lawn sloping down to the river.

It belonged to a gentleman's house, the approach to which was over the grass amidst flower beds and shrubs, while on each side was a wall fringed with trees.

The windows of a room opening on to the lawn were open.

Inside could be seen a snug little party enjoying a substantial lunch.

The popping of champagne corks mingled with the innocent laughter of young girls.

"Just in time, by hooky!" exclaimed O'Rafferty.

"For what?" asked Jack.

"Some of that lunch. Scull into the lawn."

"Do you know the people?"

"Not the least bit in the world."

"And you are going to lunch there?" continued Jack.

"That's a moral certainty, and you with me," replied O'Rafferty.

"Are you mad?" asked Jack.

"Not much. I'll give you a specimen of my sanity directly. You must do everything I tell you. Touch your cap when you are spoken to, and trate me as the master. Look here; take off your college cap and leave your gown under the safe. Put on this cricketing affair."

O'Rafferty produced from the pocket of his shooting coat two brown caps.

"I always come provided for contingencies," he said. "I flatter myself we look like business men, eh?"

"We might pass muster in a crowd," replied Jack.

He did not know in the least what they were going to do, but he sculled into the lawn.

O'Rafferty fastened the boat, and seizing the boat hook he jumped ashore.

Jack followed him.

Waiting across the lawn, O'Rafferty began to measure distances with the boat hook as it calculated how far it was from one side of the lawn.

A splendid green-house had been erected on the left, and he took very particular notice of this.

All his actions were easily observable from the windows.

Presently a tall footman in blue and silver livery, his hair powdered, left the house and stalked down towards the intruder.

"Now for it," muttered Jack. "I expect we shall get kicked into the river, and we deserve it for our cool cheek."

CHAPTER XXI.

COOL CHEEK.

THE footman approached O'Rafferty, and said, in an insolent tone:

"Are you aware you are trespassing, my man?"

"Perfectly," answered the Irishman, adding, "Mr. Martin."

"Sir," said Jack, touching his cap.

"You will make a note, if you please, to this effect. The most direct road is through the green-house on the left. The distance is six poles, one perch."

"Yes, sir," answered Jack, making an entry with a pencil in his pocket-book.

The footman spoke again.

"What am I to tell the major?" he asked.

"Major," repeated O'Rafferty, as if he was thinking deeply.

"Major Chutney, late of the Indian army, is my master."

"Ah, yes, of course. Tell Major Chutney, with my compliments, that I am Mr. Berry, surveyor to the projected extension railway, which is owned in the Abingdon, Sanford, and Illey Railway."

"Indeed, sir," said the footman, more civilly; "the major would have a fit if he thought the line was going to cut through his garden."

"And tell him," continued O'Rafferty, as if he had not heard the remark, "that it is a most important way to take off the last hand corner of the green-house, so as to cut over the meadows beyond, and so reach the terminus or junction at Oxford."

The footman went away at a quick trot.

"That will wire them, me lad; see if it don't. Look at all Chutney's strength, I wud to us. I'll lay a hundred on the line is now," replied O'Rafferty, continuing with a grin.

In fact, Major Chutney, an old and fiery Irishman, was waiting along the margin.

How far he was from O'Rafferty, he said:

"Mr.—Berry, I think I have the honor of addressing you."

"That is my name," answered O'Rafferty, stiffly.

"You are the—the surveyor of a projected railway."

"The Abingdon, Sanford and Illey Extension Line. Our bill will be in committee as soon as Parliament meets," said O'Rafferty.

"Oh, yes; dear me!" said the major, with a forced laugh. "Highly interesting and useful things, railways—um? We are at lunch. My wife and daughters will esteem it an honor if you will honor us with your company."

"Thank you, I shall be proud," answered O'Rafferty. Turning to Jack, he added:

"Martin."

"Sir," answered Jack, scarcely able to retain a smile.

"Stay by the boat, if you please, until my return," said O'Rafferty.

"Nay," replied the major "ask him to join you. He is—"

"My assistant, Major Chutney. A young man of good family, who will some day rank among our foremost engineers."

"By all means take him in. My servant will see to your boat. Here, John, Thomas, William," said the major.

"The boat is moored, sir," replied O'Rafferty. "Do not disturb your household; no harm can come to her where she is."

"It that is so, follow me," said the major, stamping back to the house.

The young men were ushered into the dining-room, and introduced to Mrs. Chutney and her two lovely daughters.

Jack was rather ashamed of the whole adventure into which he had been drawn without meaning it.

But O'Rafferty evidently looked upon it as a good joke, and a part of that fun, in search of which he had said he spent his existence.

Mrs. Chutney was extremely amiable, and the daughters found the two strangers so gentlemanly and nice that they took quite a fancy to them.

O'Rafferty flirted with Alice.

Jack made a little love to Rose.

He was far away from Emily, and thought he should never meet the young ladies again.

Such is the deceitful nature of young men.

In this expectation, however, he was deceived, for he did meet them again, and at a time when he least expected and wished for it.

Pleasant as was the little party, everything must come to an end.

The young men said good-bye, and as Jack squeezed Rose's hand, she whispered:

"We shall meet again I hope."

"Thanks; I hope so too," answered Jack.

Major Chutney preceded his guests to the boat.

"I trust, sir," he said, "that you will find a more convenient course for your railway than through my grounds."

"Rest easy, major," replied O'Rafferty; "the Abingdon, Sanford and Illey Extension shall not trouble you."

The major tried to slip a ten-pound Bank of England note into his hand.

"What!" exclaimed O'Rafferty, affecting indignation. "You dare to bribe me?"

"Only a little present, sir," answered the major.

"Bribe me, bribe a public servant!" shouted O'Rafferty, angrily. "This is an insult I cannot forgive. By the powers, sir, the railway shall come through your grounds."

"My dear, good sir," pleaded the major.

"I shall cut your greenhouse in half."

"Listen to me!"

"I will have a goods station in your kitchen garden," thundered O'Rafferty.

The major groaned, and O'Rafferty sprang into the boat, where Jack was already seated, and pushing off with stately grandeur, he left the major standing on the grass in little doubt.

When they got out of ear-shot O'Rafferty exclaimed:

"Nice sort of man, nice daughters, too; old woman a little snuffy, wine good, house good."

"I have enjoyed myself very much," answered Jack.

"But I am sorry we missed a private circle under those potatoes."

"But we saw them."

"No, you didn't, and the old man, though."

"All his own money," replied O'Rafferty. "Did he think I was a duffer?"

"I think he thought you were a duffer, but now, Mr. Harkaway, I shall look back to you and pick up your boat at the weir. By-the-by, we shall be late for hall."

"What's the matter with my boat?"

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CHAPTER XXII.

A ROBBERY AT THE BANK.

ON the whole Jack was very much pleased with his acquaintance.

When they parted in Christchurch meadows, O'Rafferty exclaimed:

"Don't be later than six, and bring a friend with you. I will ask a man, so we shall have a square party, which is much better than an angular feed of three or four."

Jack promised to do so, and went straight to Sir Sydney Lawson's rooms.

The baronet was lying on a sofa, smoking, as usual, and looking very tired and sleepy.

"Ah Harkaway!" said Sir Sydney. "It is a tremendous honor to see a man of such a fine and hearty young fellow as yourself. As for me, I am a weakling."

"What's the matter with you?" asked Jack, who knew Sir Sydney was suffering from a heart ailment.

"What's the matter?"

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"What's the matter?"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm drinking, I am indeed!"

"What are you drinking?"

"Oh, that's the best wine I have ever drunk. I am drinking it."

"And," said Jack, "I suppose you drank champagne, and played loo until daylight?"

"At a wine party, men usually do drink wine," answered Sir Sydney. "There is nothing very extraordinary in that, and I plead guilty to a little mild loo, at which I lost the trifling sum of twenty-five pounds, but I will solemnly swear that I went to bed at half past six this morning, and no one can call that dissipation. No, my health is giving way; I never was very strong. I am breaking up."

Jack laughed.

"A man stays up all night drinking and smoking," he said, "and wonders that he is seedy the next day. But wake up; I want you to dine with me."

"Can't eat," said Sir Sydney, with a melancholy shake of the head. "But where is it?"

"Oh! with a friend of mine, Mr. O'Rafferty of Magdalen."

"That's very Irish, isn't it?"

"Rather," replied Jack, with a smile.

"Will he make me laugh?" asked the baronet. "I want to laugh."

"Come and see, or rather come to my rooms when you are ready. I want to write a letter," said Jack.

It was arranged that they should go together, and Jack went to his own staircase.

He found a letter from Emily, containing an invitation from Mrs. Travers, to a grand ball that she was going to give that day three weeks.

"It will be a grand affair," she said in her letter.

"We are to have an Indian prince and his suite; his name is Prince Pompon Chatnagowrie. No expense will be spared, and we shall have such fun. Do, dear Jack, write, and say we may expect you."

"I shall be there," was Jack's mental exclamation.

Punctually at six, he and Sir Sydney, found their way to O'Rafferty's rooms, where to Jack's surprise, he saw Kemp.

Jack introduced his friend, and O'Rafferty exclaimed: "Delighted to see you, Sir Sydney. That is my friend Mr. Kemp; thought you would like to meet a man of your own college."

"We have met before," replied Sir Sydney, looking coldly at Kemp.

Jack gave him a formal nod, as he could not be rude to him, meeting him as he did at a mutual friend's, O'Rafferty not being supposed to know that they were not on a friendly footing.

Kemp was in fact the only one in the university whom Jack disliked, now Davis was dead and gone. He knew that Kemp was a friend of Hunston's, and fancied they would try to avenge Davis's death, of which he was the innocent cause.

The dinner was placed on the table, the covers lifted, and a roast leg of lamb, spinach, and potatoes were revealed to his view.

Then followed the second course.

To everyone's astonishment, this also consisted of roast leg of lamb, spinach, and potatoes.

No one made any remark; the conversation flowed on gaily, though neither Dawson nor Jack talked to Kemp more than they could help.

At length came the third course.

This also consisted of roast leg of lamb, spinach, and potatoes.

O'Rafferty began to laugh.

"Gentlemen," he said, "they say open confession is good for the soul, and I owe you an explanation. We are victims of a singular combination of circumstances."

"I must tell you that I have a running account at the Clarendon, and the Randolph hotels, but my tick is not so good as it was."

"I went this afternoon to the 'Mitre,' where they told me they could only afford to send me one course; really must not be so extravagant, etc."

"Accordingly, I went for course number two to the Clarendon, and the 'Mitre.' I left the choice of fishes to them, and as lamb and spinach are in season, I suppose they all imagined they could not send me anything nicer."

"I am sorry you should have had too much of a good thing, but I hope you will not be ashamed to look a lamb in the face the next time you take a walk in the country."

Everybody laughed.

Dawson declared that he never got tired of lamb.

And Jack politely said he could live on it for a month.

"I am not so good as you," he said, "to read with my candle. I can read by candle light for a couple of hours."

"Tutors and undergraduates," cried O'Rafferty, "are not so good as you."

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"Tutors and undergraduates," cried O'Rafferty, "are not so good as you."

"What is it, sir?" inquired that personage.

"I want to see the manager," replied Jack. "Is he here?"

"Yes, sir; he has stopped much longer than usual to-night. All are out but him; he is still in the private room to the left."

"Shall I go in?" asked Jack.

"Certainly, sir. Mr. Barber, our manager, is always glad to see college gentlemen. Just knock at the door, if you please."

While he was talking to the porter in the imperfect light of the passage, Jack fancied he felt something or some one crawl past him.

Looking towards the door, he indistinctly saw a man rise to his feet, glide down the steps, and disappear in the night.

"Who is that?"

"Did you speak, sir?" asked the porter.

"I fancied that I saw some one leave the house," answered Jack.

"Not likely, sir. I should have seen any one pass me. It's your fancy," said the porter. "Go straight on, sir, and open the second door on the left."

With a strange misgiving at his heart, Jack walked forward.

Going to the door, he knocked.

There was no answer.

He knocked again with the same result, and becoming impatient he pushed open the door, which was ajar.

The lamp was burning with a shade over it, close to the manager's desk; and though the table, upon which were bundles of papers, was well-lighted, the other part of the room was in semi-darkness.

For a moment Jack could not see objects distinctly. But when his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, he started back.

Lying on the floor was the body of the manager, Mr. Barber, in an apparently insensible condition.

He had received a blow over the head, from which the blood did not flow, and this circumstance induced Jack to believe that he was only stunned, and not seriously injured.

An open safe stood near the wall.

The condition of its contents led to the supposition that it had been recently rifled, and a large amount of gold and notes abstracted from it.

This was afterwards found to be the case.

Jack became alarmed.

Should the manager come to himself and see him there, he would suppose he was the thief.

He did not know what to do for a moment.

Retreating rapidly to the passage, he encountered the porter who exclaimed:

"Have you seen Mr. Barber, sir?"

"Yes," said Jack. "Robbery if not murder has been committed here; but hurry in and see."

"I must have your name, sir, before you go."

"Never mind my name," answered Jack. "I'll call again. Good-night."

With this he hurriedly quitted the house, and reached the cold street; but his brain was on fire, and he felt in a fever.

"I shall know him again," chuckled the porter, rubbing his hands. "Those as put up this job know how to do things. I'm to have a hundred pounds for my share, and that will about make a man of me. Oh! that one-armed un is as smart as a weasel. He can do it."

He paused and chuckled again.

"Want to fix the robbery on this young gent, I suppose, but I'm not to say too much until I'm told. All that I have to say at present is that an Oxford gent came to see the manager. He went in, and I thought I heard a fall. He came out quick, and wouldn't give his name, and looked flurried, telling me he hadn't seen the manager. I might recognize him and I might not. That's my lesson, and now I'd better go and see to Mr. Barber."

If Jack had heard the porter's reflections he would have seen that he was the victim of a detestable plot. He was too much upset to go and read with his tutor that evening, so he wended his way to his room to be alone and think.

All at once he felt in his pocket for his pass-book.

It was gone.

In his alarm he had dropped it on the floor.

Then all at once a chain of evidence rose before him.

The manager of the University Bank had been attacked and stunned while working late, and during his insensibility much valuable property had been abstracted.

This was the crime.

Jack had been told by Kemp to look for the pass-book to the manager; he had left it in his room; the manager had not seen him or it, for he was senseless.

In addition to this, Jack had foolishly said nothing to the porter, and in a guilty manner had refused his name.

The circumstances looked very suspicious against him.

Then he recollected the gliding figure coming out of the house.

"It is a plot!" he exclaimed. "Why cannot I see it now?"

As he stood there, a cold shiver ran down his spine, and he felt that he was in a trap.

A cold shiver ran down his spine, and he felt that he was in a trap.

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but it grated on Jack's ears with more than its unusual harshness.

"I heard," said Kemp, "as I came along from Magdalen that the University Bank manager had been robbed."

"What has that to do with me?" asked Jack, hotly.

"A great deal, my dear fellow," answered Kemp. "Shall I tell you?"

"If you like."

Jack had a strong inclination to knock Kemp down, yet he wished to know exactly what he intended to do; then he might defeat his enemy as he had done before.

"The porter at the house," replied Kemp, "has found the manager insensible from a blow on the head, and a large sum of money had been abstracted from a safe. I heard the porter give the alarm to the police as I passed."

"Well?"

"The only person who has had access to the manager's room since the last of the clerks left was a University man in cap and gown, and he declares that he can swear to his features."

"Well?" said Jack again, laconically.

"You have just quitted the house," continued Kemp, "and you took your pass-book with you there. By the way, where is it?"

"I dropped it in the manager's room, replied Jack, indignantly."

A flush of triumph mantled Kemp's face.

"Harkaway," said Kemp, bitterly, "you ought to know by this time how deadly I hate you, and that I would never lose a chance of ruining you."

"Have you forgotten how the best man in St. Al-

date's cut me through you?"

"Serve you right."

"Did you not," pursued Kemp, heedless of his interruption, "did you not beat me when I rode the Duke of Woodstock's horse?"

"Serve you right," again said Jack.

"Were you not the cause of Davis's death?"

"No; he brought it on himself. He was as big a blackguard as you are."

"I know I am what you and your friends call a blackguard, but I want to drag you down to my level; and more than that, to get some money out of you," returned Kemp.

"I haven't got any," said Jack; "but I have a mind to knock you down."

"That doesn't matter. I have my plan, and it is necessary for me to have you in my power. You see that I can easily have you accused of this robbery and sent to prison."

"Hunston did it; I saw the one-armed brute leave the house!" cried Jack, indignantly, shaking Kemp by the collar.

"You can't prove it; because you haven't any evidence," replied Kemp, freeing himself from Jack's grasp.

"Nor can you prove anything against me."

"Can't I? Just listen to what I've got to say. Not prove anything? That's the mistake you make. I have plotted this thing for a month, and managed that it should come off the first evening I met you. If you had not been a fool, you would have cut me clean long ago, whenever you met me."

"Am I a fool?" said Jack, biting his lips with vexation, and again advancing with his arm raised to strike Kemp.

"All honest, straightforward, and brave men like you are, or men like me couldn't get the best of you."

"Thank you for the compliment. I don't think I ever did a really scurvy thing in my life. If I did, it wasn't done purposely," said Jack. "But," he added, "you haven't the best of me yet."

"It looks very much like it," said Kemp. "The only way to get the best of me is to let me have my way. I can prove that you were there at the time of the robbery. I can prove that you took the pass-book with you. I can prove that you saw the one-armed brute leave the house. If you don't want to be accused of this robbery and sent to prison, you must let me have my way."

"Exactly what I expected," said Kemp. "You cannot answer."

"What do you want? I defy you," exclaimed Jack, angrily. "Do your worst. What do you think of that?"

"No, you won't," replied Kemp, calmly. "You are a little raw and excited, that is very natural. You will sleep over it, and to-morrow you will think very differently. Go to your room, old fellow, and expect me to-morrow."

"I am not so good as you," he said, "to read with my candle. I can read by candle light for a couple of hours."

"Tutors and undergraduates," cried O'Rafferty, "are not so good as you."

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"Tutors and undergraduates," cried O'Rafferty, "are not so good as you."

"There's your five bob, then," answered O'Rafferty. "Hillo!" exclaimed Jack, who could not make head nor tail of this brief conversation. "Who expected to see you here?"

"As you did not come back as Kemp went away, and as the lively baronet went to sleep like a pig on my sofa," answered O'Rafferty, "I thought I would come and give you a hail at your diggings."

"You are welcome," said Jack, "Sit down and make your miserable life happy. What's your liquor?"

"I never drink anything less than champagne when I visit my friends," replied O'Rafferty.

"Monday, open some Moët & Chandon," said Jack.

"Excuse me a moment," continued Jack, "will you? I want to ask my servant a question."

"Certainly."

"Have you been to see Mr. Harvey to-night?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sare."

"How is he?"

"Him much better. Missey Hilda say the doctor very well satisfied, sare."

"That's all right. Did you take the grapes and things, and say I should come to-morrow?"

"Yes, sare, it am all right."

"Then make yourself scarce," said Jack.

Monday departed, and left the collegians together.

Jack wasn't at all sorry of his new friend's society for he wanted some one to cheer him up.

Kemp's threats lay upon him like a nightmare.

"Now," exclaimed O'Rafferty, "you must come back with me; coffee will be ready at nine, that is, if my scout is sober enough to remember my orders."

In vain Jack pleaded a headache; his friend would take no refusal, and they walked back to Magdalen.

During the walk O'Rafferty said:

"I am going to a ball in a week or two, and if you will come with me, you shall see some fun. Mrs. Travers—"

"Who?" asked Jack, quickly.

"Mrs. Travers, of Oakly Wood, near here, has sent me an invitation. Do you know her?"

"I have heard the name," replied Jack, thinking to have some fun if he concealed the actual state of his intimacy in that quarter.

"Oh, I am hand and glove there," continued the volatile Irishman. "We are related. What the deuce the exact degree of relationship is I can't tell you, but I have a vague idea that my mother and Mrs. Travers, were somebody's nieces, and if that wouldn't make me a sort of cousin of Mrs. Travers, why, by jabsers, I don't understand the case at all, at all."

"I'll accompany you with pleasure," replied Jack, who said nothing about the invitation he had received from Emily.

"You shall, me boy," replied O'Rafferty.

"What sort of people are they?"

"Mrs. Travers is a widder, you know," answered O'Rafferty, who spoke with a little of the Irish brogue after indulging in a bottle or two of wine; "and she lives with a companion, a sweet, pretty colleen they call Emily."

Jack smiled to himself.

"What a lovely girl!" said the Irishman.

"No wonder, then. I'm sure you and I know that Emily is rather pleased with your humble servant's attentions."

"The deuce she is."

"Yes," continued O'Rafferty. "I've got a way with me. I know all the women over here."

"I don't want to whisper in their little pink ears, but I can't help it. If they don't like me, I'll tell them a few words, and they'll be as good as mine."

"Does Emily really like you?" inquired Jack.

The foolish fellow was actually getting jealous.

"Like me?" said O'Rafferty, who was one of those men who are very fond of talking about ladies, and declaring that they are loved, though the ladies have only been civilly to them.

"Yes."

"I don't like me! Me dear boy, she's madly in love with me. I don't know that it will ever come to anything, because, she has no chips, and being poor."

"I don't know," said Jack.

"You must be a little more civil to her."

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"Stake the money," said Jack.

"That would puzzle a sinner like meself," answered O'Rafferty. "For I take the saints to witness that I haven't so much in my possession by four pounds nineteen and sixpence."

"Nonsense!" said Jack. "Are you really hard up?"

"Stumped, my boy. Hard up's no name for it, and I'm too proud to beg for it."

"Beg!"

"I call borrowing begging; there is no humbug about me. Borrowing money is a polite way of begging."

Jack put his hand in his pocket, and drawing out two ten-pound notes, gave them to O'Rafferty.

"Will you let me lend you these?" he said.

O'Rafferty looked at him for a moment as they stood in the middle of the High Street, being about to come over to Magdalen.

Then he burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

This Jack could not understand.

CHAPTER XXIV.

KEMP'S PROMISED VISIT.

"WHAT'S the matter?" asked Jack. "I never saw such a funny fellow as you are. I offer to lend you a couple of tenners, and you laugh at me."

"I can't help it, me dear boy," replied O'Rafferty. "It's making your last good-by of them ye are."

"How's that?"

"Hand them over, I'm proud, but I'll pay you in some way or other. If ye don't get it in meal, ye shall have it in malt, but me humble means won't allow me to pay in cash."

"Never mind that; pay me when you can," said Jack, good-naturedly.

"That'll be when I marry an heiress. It will come some day. I've got such a winning way with me."

O'Rafferty took the notes and put them in his pocket.

They were now reaching the Irishman's room, and at the foot of the staircase, O'Rafferty seized Jack's hand and wrung it.

"You're a real good fellow," he whispered. "I never pay. I've told you that, but by the way, that played before Moses, I won't forget ye."

Jack returned the pressure of his hand, feeling that if the Irishman was poor, and somewhat reckless, he wasn't bad hearted and that he could rely upon his friendship and native wit in a crisis.

"Heaven knows," he muttered to himself, "that I want a friend badly enough just now."

When they entered O'Rafferty's room, they found Sir Sydney Dawson still asleep on the sofa.

"Hist!" exclaimed the Irishman, taking up a champagne cork and blacking its edge in the fire.

He approached Sir Sydney and deliberately ornamented the sleeping baronet's cheeks, nose and forehead with black smudges.

"That's quite artistic, I flatter myself," he exclaimed.

Presently the baronet, hearing voices, woke up and yawned.

"I've been asleep, it seems to me," he said. "Really I must apologize for my uncouth behavior."

He walked to the fire-place, and looked into the glass.

"Who has been amusing himself at my expense?" he inquired, as an angry flush crossed his face.

No one made any answer.

"Mr. O'Rafferty," continued Dawson, "my face has been blackened whilst I slept, and I must tell you that if you are the author of what I call an outrage, it is a gross breach of hospitality."

"My dear fellow," replied O'Rafferty, "it was only a joke."

"I don't like such jokes."

"Well, well, it was only a joke."

"This is the first time I have seen you," continued Sir Sydney, "and by Jove! I'll take care it is the last. If you were not in your own room I don't know that I shouldn't kick you."

"I don't like that," said O'Rafferty.

"I don't like that," said O'Rafferty.

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"I don't like that," said O'Rafferty.

Jack jumped out of bed and was convinced that the sound came from some quarter of his own apartments.

A diligent search informed him that at least two cocks were shut up in his cupboard.

He looked everywhere for the key, but could not find it.

Reflecting a moment, he remembered the conversation between Monday and O'Rafferty.

"That is it," he exclaimed. "The infernal Irishman has bribed Monday to say nothing about it, and he has brought some cocks, and perhaps some hens, and put them in my cupboard. Bother him."

Sleep was out of the question.

The cocks kept on crowing one after another.

Currook, c'rook, c'roo-o-o sounded every half-minute, until poor Jack was very nearly distracted.

He tried to kick in one of the panels of the cupboard, which for some time resisted his efforts.

At last it gave away.

A stately game-cock stepped out and flapped its wings, singing "currook, currook, currook-o-o."

It was followed by another.

Jack made a dash at the first one, which becoming alarmed, flew on the mantle piece and knocked down the clock and two lustres under a glass shade.

Smash went the lustres.

Away flew the cocks, with Jack after them, round and round the room.

He tumbled over the furniture, broke chairs, upset the table, smashing several bottles and glasses, and at last caught one cock as it flew up against a picture which it brought to the ground with a doleful crash.

The second chase had the same result.

Both birds were eventually captured and secured.

It seemed a very long time till Monday made his appearance.

Jack saw him and threw the tea-pot at his head.

"Mind um head, Mast' Jack," cried Monday, ducking on one side.

The tea-pot was followed by the milk-jug, which struck him on the forehead and covered him with its contents.

"What um throw things for, sare?" asked Monday, dripping with milk.

"You villain," said Jack; "you took a whole lot of Mr. O'Rafferty's put ducks in my cupboard, and kept me awake the whole night."

Monday held down his head in a very contrite manner.

He had been found out.

"Get out of my sight and don't let me see you again the whole day," continued Jack; if you do, something will happen to you."

"But, Mast' Jack—"

"You dare to argue with me and see what you'll get. Be off."

Monday slunk away, much to Buster's gratification, for the latter was delighted with his disgrace.

"Buster," said Jack.

"Yes, sir," replied the scout.

"If anyone comes, say I'm not up, and can't be disturbed. Do you hear?"

"Certainly, sir, not at home to nobody."

Monday, in going away, had left the door open, which permitted a man to enter without knocking.

"You forget me," he said, with a blank smile.

Jack turned his worn and haggard face to him, and recognized Kemp.

"I told you I should come to breakfast. Sorry I'm late, but I dare say your scout can knock me up an anchovy toast and a couple of eggs," continued Kemp.

Jack hesitated a moment.

Then turning to the scout, he said:

"Get Mr. Kemp some breakfast, after that you can go and wait for me."

In ten minutes the breakfast was ready, the scout having left Jack alone with his enemy.

Kemp sat down to his breakfast.

Jack sat down to his breakfast.

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CHAPTER XXV.

JACK OUTWITS KEMP.

HAVING finished his breakfast with a much better appetite than Harkaway had found for his, Kemp smoked his cigar slowly, and began business.

"I suppose," he said, "that you have thought over the state of affairs, and come to the only possible conclusion?"

"What is that?" asked Jack.

"Simply that you are in my power, and are fixed so tightly that you cannot escape."

"You have concocted a very strong plot," Jack said.

"Never mind the violent adjectives. I am thick-skinned, and don't mind abuse. It only wastes time."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "what do you want me to do?"

"If you remain quiet and put yourself in my hands, I will tell you."

There was no reply.

"Silence gives consent. Am I to suppose that you are willing to buy my forbearance?" asked Kemp.

Jack did not reply.

He was thinking of a scheme by which he should outwit Kemp and his scout.

"You are a very clever fellow," Kemp continued.

"I want to see you, and they will come to see me," said Jack.

"I will see you, and they will come to see me," said Jack.

"I will see you, and they will come to see me," said Jack.

"I will see you, and they will come to see me," said Jack.

"I will see you, and they will come to see me," said Jack.

"How much money can you get?"

Jack thought a moment.

"I don't think I can get any," he answered. "All I have is fifty pounds, and that is to last me some time."

"Give it me; you must get into debt. I want five hundred. Write home for some and borrow the rest." "By Jove!" exclaimed Jack, between his teeth, "you are a villain."

"Of course I am, and I feel proud of it. Give me the cheque."

"If I do it will be only on certain conditions."

"Let me have the money first," replied Kemp, "then if your conditions are not unreasonable, I will agree to them."

"These are my conditions, I shall have to write home for the greater portion of the cash, and the governor will very likely send notes. Now I want you to keep these notes in hand. Keep them from circulation for some time. I don't want the governor to think that I am going ahead too fast."

Kemp thought a time.

At first Jack's coolness puzzled him, then he ascribed it to perfect recklessness, for was not Jack about to commit himself still more deeply by giving him the hush money demanded.

"I agree," said he. "I am not hard up for cash at present, and I will keep the notes for three months, at the end of which time they will be paid into the bank."

This being settled, an appointment was made for the second morning from that, and the two parted.

The eventful morning came.

Jack was prepared with the notes, the numbers of which he had copied.

He had also done something to the notes, but what must be a good secret for the present.

Kemp came.

"Well, have you the cash?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Jack, "it is here."

And he handed the other a roll of notes.

Kemp counted them, examined the water-marks, and found everything correct.

"By-by!" said he. "You will see me at the ball."

He sauntered out and Jack followed him.

In the quadrangle a tailor met Kemp.

"Really, sir, I must have money," he said.

"Well, here is a twenty-pound note for you. Be off," said Kemp, handing him one of those he had just received from Jack, who at that moment stepped forward.

"Oblige me, Mr. Schultz, by making a memorandum of the number and date of that note," said he.

"What folly is this?" Kemp asked, fiercely.

"Silence! I mean to have my own way a little," said Jack.

The astonished knight of the needle, who did not know what to make of this, read aloud from the face of the note:

"No. D. F. 120,009."

"Good," said Jack, making a note in his book.

The tailor bowed and hastened away, and Jack, turning to Kemp, said:

"You must understand, Mr. Kemp, that I will have you keep your promise. By taking the money of me, as the price of silence, you have reduced yourself to the position of my accomplice in any crime I may have committed, or, at any rate, you are an accessory after the fact."

"Curse you!" said Kemp. "I did not think you were so artful."

He slunk away, and Jack proceeded after the tailor, who was easily persuaded to exchange his bank note for another which our hero offered him.

Jack was not a little satisfied with the result of his little game, and he was not alone in being so.

There were coming to a party given at Oxford, every one of whom was a member of the Black Band.

First of all an undergraduate was stabbed on theIFY road, then the Jew Blanas was murdered for plunder, and after that came the attack on the bank manager and the robbery of the safe.

As for Mr. Barber, the manager, he could remember nothing.

He was sitting at the bank when the robbery was committed, and he was the only one who saw the robbers. He saw them enter the bank, and he saw them leave it. He saw them take the money, and he saw them hide it. He saw them all, and he saw them do everything.

He declared that a university gentleman had been at the bank about the time the robbery was committed, and had gone in and out of the bank.

He said that he had seen the gentleman, and that he had seen him take the money.

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Harkaway had, with the spirit of youth, recovered his good temper.

Advancing to Dawson he shook his hand and said:

"This is jolly of you. I thought you wouldn't cut me because O'Rafferty played jokes."

"I don't like it, though. You must shunt that man," replied the baronet.

"He didn't mean anything."

"The fellow is a perfect mountebank, a regular Hottentot. I shall have a row with him when I meet him. I couldn't kick up a row in the man's own room when I was his guest, but I felt most infernally riled."

"Enough to make you; but it's only his way."

"And a very unpleasant way, too. I never allow anybody to take liberties with me. I can't bear to be touched," exclaimed Sir Sydney.

"He is always playing tricks upon somebody."

"I'll lay odds he gets his head punched. Has he been up long?"

"I don't know. I only met him yesterday for the first time," said Jack.

"Upon my word, Harkaway, you are a most remarkable fellow," replied Sir Sydney. "You pick up a man who is nobody-knows-who, and go to dine with him the same day, and, more than that, you take me, the most particular man in Oxford. I shall fight shy of your invitations in future."

"I didn't know that any harm would come of it."

"You've got common sense, haven't you?"

"I hope so."

"Use it, then, in future. Why don't you make a friend of your scout, or pick up a potman at a pub? By Jove! the 'varsity is coming to something," said Sir Sydney, stretching himself on a sofa.

"I fancied that every Oxford man was a gentleman," replied Jack.

"Then you make a huge mistake. The place swarms with cads. You can't be too particular. Some colleges are more select than others, but the cads creep in everywhere. Oxford is public, you know, and coming up is only a matter of money, or sometimes cheek, for fellows come up on next to nothing, try for money, get into debt, and, if they fail, take their names off, and the Oxonian world sees them no more."

"You are becoming quite practical," said Jack, smiling.

Sir Sydney was about to reply, when Monday entered in O'Rafferty, who came in high spirits.

"Ah, Harkaway," he exclaimed, "how do; Sir Sydney, your servant. Sorry for the cork business last night; but I'm a county Cork man. Ha, ha! that accounts for it; and at least it must be a satisfaction to you to know that you are not as black as you're painted. Ha, ha, ha!"

"My good sir," said Sir Sydney, raising himself on his elbow, and staring insolently at the Irishman through an eyeglass. "I will thank you to address your conversation to Mr. Harkaway, whose friend you appear to be."

Turning to Jack, O'Rafferty exclaimed:

"That is a very dangerous friend of yours. Can't you get rid of him?"

Sir Sydney got up angrily.

"I'm a peer to a peer," he said, "you are not a gentleman."

"That's what you may call sovereign contempt," replied the Irishman. "But really, you are very difficult to please. You tell me to talk to Harkaway, and then you are not satisfied."

Sir Sydney Dawson took his handkerchief from his pocket, dusted the sole of his boot with it, and then coolly threw it in O'Rafferty's face.

The Irishman's blood boiled.

He could not bear such an insult as this. Throwing himself upon Dawson, he bore him

to the earth and would have pummelled him had not Jack dragged him off.

Jack seemed to have the strength of two ordinary men.

Standing between them, the giant of the river and cricket-field, said:

"Gentlemen, I will have no fighting in my rooms."

The two men glared at one another.

"Understand this," continued Jack, "that I will floor the first man who attempts to strike the other."

"I am satisfied," said Sir Sydney, shrugging his shoulders, adjusting his gown, and putting on his cap, which had fallen off in the struggle.

He moved towards the door, when he stopped.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Harkaway," he continued, "to have been the cause of a disgraceful riot in your place, but the fault is not mine."

"I'll be hanged if it's mine," said O'Rafferty. "I come with an apology, and, be jabers, I'm insulted. Haven't I the best Irish blood in my veins? Wasn't me ancestors kings? By the powers!"

"O'Rafferty, oblige me by holding your tongue," said Jack.

"Or ye'll knock me down, eh?"

"I will, by Jove!"

"That's an oath," exclaimed the Irishman.

"You are too big for me, and I've no quarrel with you, but as for that spalpeen with the tuft tassel, if ever I get the chance, I'll kick him from here to the bogs of Kerry."

Sir Sydney, with his feathers ruffled, went away, and the Irishman threw himself into his chair, bursting out laughing.

"I think I shook all the life out of him," he said. "But after all it was me own fault. If you play jokes you must take the consequences. I lost one of my front teeth once through it, but I'll keep on till the day of my death, and now what shall I do with his rag?"

He looked at the handkerchief which had been insolently tossed at him.

"I'll hang it out of my window, which looks on the High, and I'll write on a piece of paper, 'The White flag, Sir Sydney Dawson's colors.' If he don't call me out after that, he's a cur."

"I don't think Dawson will fight," replied Jack.

"Why not?"

"His nerves are shaky, and it's tit for tat after all."

"So it is. We'll let it alone, but I'll hang the flag out. No, I won't; I'll play him another practical joke," exclaimed O'Rafferty, laughing.

"I wish you had been at the—somewhere before you put those cocks in my cupboard," said Jack.

"I, dear boy?" replied O'Rafferty, with affected simplicity.

"You know you did it."

"Well, I plead guilty. Did you sleep well?"

"Not a wink all night. So if you will oblige me by taking your hook, I'll turn in," replied Jack.

"All right, don't forget the Tavern's bill. I've got lots of fun on there, and I'll have you to study, the divine little Lady."

"Good bye," said Jack, impatiently.

"You're in a deuce of a hurry to get rid of me," cried O'Rafferty. "But, no matter; I'm o. p. h."

"What's that?"

"Off; it's our way of spelling it. Bye-bye!"

The Irishman went out of the room, and Jack, undressing himself, turned into bed to get that rest of which he stood so much in need.

The next week passed without any further incident.

Jack recovered his serenity, and completed the insurance of his life in Kemp's favor, by which Kemp would gain three thousand pounds, if Harkaway died.

By this means Kemp had a direct interest in Jack's death.

Harkaway grew gradually better, though he could not leave his room.

CHAPTER NINE

THE IRISHMAN'S BLOOD BOILED.

Jack had not been long in bed when Sir Sydney Dawson called upon him.

All his friends visited him daily, and Hilda waited upon him like a nurse, in a way that showed that she took more than a sisterly interest in him.

The rich and lovely widow of the Duke of Woodstock made a greater impression upon Harvey day by day.

He loved her dearly.

Did she return his affection?

Time will show.

Sir Sydney Dawson and O'Rafferty did not call one another out, though when they met, they looked very stiffly at one another.

The day appointed for Mrs. Travers' ball drew near.

Both Jack and O'Rafferty got leave from their college authorities to stay away for a day or two.

They drove over together early in the morning, as O'Rafferty declared his relative, Mrs. Travers, would never get on without him.

The Prince Pompom Chatnagowrie was coming with his suite, and great efforts had to be made to receive him.

All the county families near were invited to meet his highness.

It was to be a grand affair.

Throwing the reins to a groom, Jack, who drove, jumped down from the trap and entered the house on his arrival, followed by O'Rafferty.

Emily was alone in the morning room, and seeing Jack, threw herself into his arms, saying:

"Dear Jack, I am so—so glad to see you."

He kissed her tenderly.

"My pet!" he replied, "my darling! It seems an age since we met."

Looking up, Emily saw the Irishman, and blushed.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "there is Mr. O'Rafferty."

"He says you are in love with him, Emily," remarked Jack, laughing.

"Don't mind him, me dear," replied O'Rafferty, looking rather foolish. "It's a way he's got."

"Mr. O'Rafferty's a relation of Mrs. Travers," answered Emily, coldly, "but a very slight acquaintance of mine."

"Oh, you young rascal!" said the Irishman. "You never told me of this. You have been making fun of me."

"Own you were wrong, and apologize," said Jack.

"I'll own anything you like; let us be happy. If Miss Emily does not love me, she likes me; don't you, my dear?"

"I don't like or dislike you," answered Emily.

"I'm a nice man, am I not?"

"I've seen nicer."

"Now, you are cruel! I'll pay you out, see if I don't. But shake hands," said Rafferty. "All I did was to have a bit of fun with our friend Harkaway, here. I knew he was the 'varsity man you was engaged to all along. Sure, you are the loveliest little darling in all Oxfordshire."

"I don't want your stupid compliments, Mr. O'Rafferty, so you had better keep them for some one who will appreciate them," replied Emily.

"Oh, be jabbers!" exclaimed the Irishman. "This is a feast. I must be off till the thray comes. It's no thanks I'll get for standing between two lovers. Spoon away, my beauties; I'll go up and help Mrs. Travers prepare for these blighted Indians who are coming to-morrow."

He left them together, and they were not sorry at his departure.

When Jack explained to Emily how O'Rafferty had talked about her, she could not refrain from laughing.

They enjoyed one another's society until late at night, when they went into the dining-room.

Mrs. Travers was already there, and O'Rafferty, who had been out for a walk, entered the room after.

At the same moment the sound of carriage wheels was heard.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Travers, "these are the Chutneys. You know, dear Emily, I asked Mrs. Chutney to allow the girls to come early. The major and herself will follow later. Such nice girls you will find them. Do you know the Chutneys, Mr. Harkaway?"

Jack and O'Rafferty looked blankly at one another.

The major was a very fiery-tempered gentleman, and he might prove very disagreeable.

Jack and O'Rafferty remembered their escapade on the river; how they had made Major Chutney believe they were the surveyors for the Abingdon, Sandford, and Itley Extension Line of railways.

Mrs. Travers was obliged to repeat the question.

"I think I have a—seen them."

Emily looked suspiciously at him.

"Here's a go," he thought to himself. "That confounded Irishman is always getting me into some scrape or other."

The young ladies were ushered in, and shook hands and kissed Mrs. Travers and Emily; then they saw the two gentlemen, to whom they bowed stiffly.

"Are you going to have a railway through your grounds, Mrs. Travers?" asked Miss Chutney.

"A railway?" repeated Mrs. Travers, "what-ever put that into your head?"

"Because I see the surveyor of the proposed Abingdon Extension Line and his clerk at the table."

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Travers, "these gentlemen are from Oxford; one is Mr. O'Rafferty, of Magdalen, my cousin; the other Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldate's, of whom you must have heard."

"Who has not heard of Mr. Harkaway?" said the younger sister with a tender glance.

She thought of the squeeze of the hand Jack had given her.

"All I can say is," exclaimed the older Miss Chutney, "that if these gentlemen are what you represent them to be, we have been grossly imposed upon. I know papa keeps a horse-whip, and I hope he will use it."

Mrs. Travers and Emily stared at them in amazement.

"Can you explain this, Patrick?" asked Mrs. Travers.

"Only a joke, my dear cousin," replied O'Rafferty. "Miss Chutney is quite right. Delightful name, Chutney—suggestive of pickles. We were on the river; we saw the Chutneys at lunch. We were hungry; we introduced ourselves."

"Under a false pretense, sir," interrupted Miss Chutney.

"Your lovely faces must be our excuse," said O'Rafferty.

"Lovely faces, indeed!" muttered Emily, crossly.

"Jack," said O'Rafferty, "I think we will leave the ladies to have a chat while we have a walk."

Jack was only too glad to make his escape, as the position was embarrassing, and Emily had given him a look he did not like.

She was jealous of the youngest Miss Chutney.

Following O'Rafferty, he soon found himself on the lawn, in the center of which was a handsome pavilion for the reception of the Indian prince and his suite.

"Come inside and smoke a weed," said O'Rafferty. "It was getting hot in there, and I thought it was good enough to cut it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

O'RAFFERTY'S TRICKS AT THE BALL.

WHEN they were seated in the large tent, or pavilion, which was very tastefully arranged with flowers, hanging baskets, and oriental lanterns, Jack said:

"I am sorry we have been overlooked. Em-

ily will not like me for taking part in your joke."

"Nonsense," replied O'Rafferty. "She knows me well enough to understand my playful disposition."

"Are you going to indulge in any fun here?"

"It's what I came for, me boy," answered the Irishman. "Just wait a bit, bide a wee, as our Scotch friends say. Here is my friend, James the footman; we will see how he has executed my commissions."

A tall footman entered the tent and advanced to O'Rafferty, who exclaimed:

"Have you made the cow all right?"

"Yes, sir, I've got the outrageousest, vicious, est thing as I could find," was the reply.

"What's that for?" asked Jack.

"I will tell you. My cousin, Mrs. Travers, is of a romantic and slightly pastoral turn of mind," said O'Rafferty, "and she has had a room at the top of the grand staircase, fitted up as a stable. The cow is to be put inside, and a pretty milkmaid is to sit on a stool and draw new milk for any one that may want it."

"Then the cow is for that purpose," said Jack.

"Precisely, and if she doesn't upset stool, milkmaid and all, and then make a bolt into the ball-room and upset everyone else, it is not my fault."

O'Rafferty rubbed his hands with glee.

"You are sure, James," he said, "that it is a perfect beast?"

"I'd back this cow, sir, against our coachman's wife, and that's saying a great deal," replied James.

"Good, and now have you brought the jalap?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give it to the cook with the half-sovereign, and tell her to put it in the macaroon cakes."

"All of it? Sir, there's a good lot."

"Every h'aporth," replied O'Rafferty.

"There's the arsenic, sir," continued James.

"Ah, yes: give that to me. It's for the fish. You know, Harkaway, or rather you don't know, that in the ball-room we have constructed a little river running all round the room, made of rock work, ornamented with lilies and ferns, and filled with fish, netted from the lake. The arsenic is to poison them."

"What a shame! I've a good mind to tell Mrs. Travers," said Jack.

"Oh, you sneak. I shall have to hit you over the head with the poker, or do something dreadful to you, if you talk of telling," replied O'Rafferty.

"You have forgotten the cayenne pepper, sir," said James.

"Give it here," answered O'Rafferty; that's to put on the floor of the ball-room, and make them all sneeze. Anything else James?"

"No, sir, that is all you told me to get."

"What time is supper to be served for the black prince?"

"One, sir, cos they goes early."

"Very well. At ten minutes to one, let it be put on the table, or say half-past twelve. It's all cold, and can't hurt."

"I'll put it on at twelve, sir, and have it ready," replied the footman.

"That will do. Here is what I promised you. Keep your mouth shut," said O'Rafferty, handing him one of the notes Jack had lent him a week or so before.

James bowed his acknowledgments and went away.

"Isn't it rather too bad to do all this sort of thing, and upset the arrangements?" remarked Jack.

"Not a bit. It's fun; I'm a purveyor of fun. I may call myself a fun merchant; it's all in my line of business," replied O'Rafferty.

"I shall have nothing to do with it."

"Why?"

"It's an abuse of hospitality."

"My dear Harkaway, you're a humbug," said O'Rafferty, mildly. "You will enjoy the fun as much as I shall, but you haven't the Irish wit to get it up or the pluck to help one."

"Does gentlemanly feeling go for nothing?" asked Jack.

"Not in fun."

"Well," said Jack, "I will have no hand in it."

"You are like the boy at school who gets another to let off a cracker for him. Never mind, let's join the ladies."

They returned to the house, and found the ladies in an excellent temper.

Mrs. Travers had explained to the Miss Chutneys that O'Rafferty, her lively cousin, was a determined practical joker, and he and Jack were soon forgiven.

Emily took Jack aside, and said to him privately:

"The next time, sir, you meet a young lady under false pretences, do not squeeze her hand, because you may be found out."

"I didn't, Emmy," replied Jack with his eyes cast down.

"No stories, sir, if you please. You are found out, and to punish you, I shall make you dance the first dance to-night with Miss Chutney, and I don't know that I shall give you one till quite the end of the evening."

"Oh, Emmy dear, you are unkind," pleaded Jack.

"So I ought to be, I think. My opinion is that Mr. O'Rafferty is a very bad companion for you," replied Emily.

Jack thought so, too, but he did not say anything, and the conversation ended, as Miss Chutney and her sister were going, at O'Rafferty's solicitation, to make, as he whispered to Jack, "a noise on the piano."

Jack told every lady to be very kind and complimentary, because he knew they would ask him a variety of questions, if she saw him, which he would have much difficulty in answering.

O'Rafferty was as amusing as anyone could wish.

The ladies listened to his conversation and laughed until dinner time, after which they retired to dress themselves for the ball; the two men followed this example, and were first to arrive in the ball-room.

Mrs. Travers had surpassed herself in decoration.

The hall and staircase were filled with flowers and shrubs, on the landing stood the cow, fastened to a partition by a halter; the floor covered with straw, and the cow, much to her satisfaction, nibbled mangolds and turnips.

Around the hall-room was a miniature trout stream, the sides of which were made of cement and rock-work, and furnished with fish speared in the water, which was filled with ferns and lilies.

In the center of the room rose a fountain of perfume, which, after ascending and making a great noise, fell into a glass basin, where the guests went to wash their hands.

"Now," said O'Rafferty, "to work."

"Don't expect me to help you," replied Jack.

"I don't want you. Sit still," answered O'Rafferty.

Jack took a seat under some orange trees and looked on, and watched his cousin work.

O'Rafferty walked round the miniature trout stream and began to pick up pieces of wood and leaves, which he put in a bowl and carried to the fountain of the fish stream.

On the floor he sprinkled a quantity of orange leaves.

At last he put some laughing and on the floor, which he had put up, would be the reason of his work.

Soon the guests began to arrive.

Mrs. Travers received them, and by one in the parlor and another in the parlor.

Among the last to come were the Prince and his suite, and the ladies.

Mr. O'Rafferty was standing in the hall, and Mrs. Travers moved him to the parlor, and he went to the parlor.

Jack was standing in the hall, and Mrs. Travers moved him to the parlor, and he went to the parlor.

Suddenly the cow kicked up her hind legs and sent the maiden sprawling on her back, while the pail with its contents flew up against the cashmere robes of the prince.

A jerk broke the halter which held the cow, and the wild beast dashed away, upsetting the prince and Mrs. Travers, and creating fearful havoc among the suite.

Blinded by the glare of lights in the drawing-room, the animal charged down the staircase.

Many county families who were ascending were thrown violently backwards. Great was the screaming.

Terrible was the destruction of muslin.

A perfect panic reigned by this time.

The cow reached the hall, having blundered down-stairs, only to be secured by the servants and led away.

Mrs. Travers was full of apologies to the prince.

His highness smiled blandly, allowed the milk to be wiped off his robes, and giving his arm to the mistress of the house, entered the ball-room, leaving his suite to recover themselves as best they could.

"Come, your highness," exclaimed Mrs. Travers, "and see my beautiful fish in real water. I am extremely sorry for the unruly behavior of that cow, but you must forgive her. Cows, I believe, are sacred among the Hindoos."

"Madam," replied the prince, "I am a Mahometan."

He spoke coldly, and was evidently annoyed.

Mrs. Travers thought the sight of the fish would put him in a good temper, but what was her dismay when she saw them all floating on the surface.

"Eh!" said the prince, "dead fish! Ah, very good, dead fish."

"They were all alive when they were put in. This is very singular," answered Mrs. Travers. "Will your highness condescend to have some refreshment?"

"Biscuit and glass of water, thank you," replied the prince, still more coldly.

"Perhaps a macaroon would please you. James, the macaroons for his highness, exclaimed Mrs. Travers.

At the entrance of the ball-room the prince and his suite regarded themselves upon macaroons and water.

"Now," said Mrs. Travers, "you will dance the first quadrille with me, your highness. I will provide your suite with partners."

In a short time a double set was made up, and the dancing began, but it had not proceeded far before every one began to sneeze violently.

O'Rafferty, who was looking on, and sitting in a corner with Jack, said:

"The cow worked well, the fish are all dead, and now the pepper I put on the floor is making them all sneeze as if they had the influenza. What a happy day we're having."

"It's a shame," replied Jack.

"Not a bit. Look at the prince; he's hot. He wants to wipe his forehead, and goes to the fountain. The ladies followed the royal example. Watch him, Jack! Bravo! He'll be as black as niggers soon, and smell like a pig."

O'Rafferty was right.

The laughing was so continuous and the sneezing so incessant, that the quadrille could not be finished.

Everybody ran to the great fountain, dipping their handkerchiefs in it, and sneezing their faces with laughing and sneezing of course.

A great confusion arose.

The ladies looked at themselves in the mirrors, and tried to arrange their compliments.

It was very little difference to the prince and his suite, as they were Indians and naturally dark; but what once the prince put his hand on his stomach, and bending down, said to his private valet:

"I am hot, my lord."

"So am I," replied the prime vizier, making a face, "very bad indeed, sire."

The members of the suite all put their hands to their stomachs.

Then the prince, followed by the whole of them, made a rush for the door.

Mrs. Travers could not understand it at all.

She stared blankly after them.

So did the company.

O'Rafferty laughed till his sides ached.

"That's the jalap in the macaroons," he whispered to Jack, "What a lark!"

"You are too bad," replied Jack, who could not help laughing too.

"Wait a bit, my dear boy. You haven't come to the end of it yet," answered the Irishman.

In time the prince returned, and sat down with his suite.

The dancing proceeded without further interruption, and Emily so far for forgave Jack as to give him her hand for a waltz.

While they were waiting for the music to begin, she said:

"If you help Mr. O'Rafferty in his jokes, I shall be very angry with you. Mrs. Travers doesn't suspect him, but I do."

"What for, Emmy?" asked Jack, innocently.

"Oh, a great many things. We have been nearly killed by a wild, savage cow; we have coughed and blacked all our faces; the fish are dead, and the poor Indians have been taken ill."

"It wasn't I who did it," replied Jack.

"But you are as bad, because you know all about it. Never mind; we don't often see one another, so I shan't scold you."

"That's right," said Jack, "don't."

"Tell me all about yourself, dear," she continued. "How are you getting on at college?"

"Very well, thanks."

"Are you working hard?"

"Yes."

"Nothing to worry you since that odious Davis died?" she asked.

"No," replied Jack.

"I am glad of that. Do you know when I first saw you - day, I thought you looked sad?"

"Did I?" queried Jack.

"You did indeed."

"Oh, it was nothing. Hard reading makes an alteration in a man, I can tell you, Emily, I don't get enough exercise."

"It is silly to work too hard. Stop here a day or two, and have some shooting with Mr. O'Rafferty."

"I don't mind," answered Jack.

"I must leave you when the dance is over," she continued; "because I have to dance with Lord somebody or other. I forget his name."

"Don't fall in love with your swell, Emily."

"No fear," she replied, smiling.

"Oh, Jack, dear, you shouldn't say such things to me!"

"You know I love you, Emily, better than anything in the world. I'd kiss you if there were not so many people looking on."

"Gone away, you stupid," she replied, as the music ceased and the dance was over.

Reluctantly he gave her up to her next partner, and went to look for O'Rafferty.

He found him in the drawing-room talking to James the footman.

"Come on, Harkaway. I have no time to lose," said the Irishman.

"What are you going to be up to now?"

"It's supper time for the Indian swell, and I want to see that everything is properly arranged for them."

He grinned as he spoke, and Jack guessed that he was engaged in some fresh mischief.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

QUITTING the ballroom, O'Rafferty led Jack to the lawn, where a handsome pavilion was erected.

The prince and his suite were to have supper there, and by themselves, and various dishes which they liked were provided for them.

Being Mahometans, they would not eat the usual fare which found favor in the eyes of Christians.

O'Rafferty sent James up to the leader of the band, telling him and his men to come down at once and have their supper.

This order was gladly obeyed, and twelve hungry men were ushered into the pavilion.

"Now, my fine fellows," said O'Rafferty, as the musicians entered, "fall to; eat and drink what you like, but I can only allow you ten minutes."

"Thank you, sir," replied the leader; "we won't be longer than we can help."

Prodigious was the clatter of the knives and forks.

In ten minutes the board was cleared, and all the dainties, prepared at a great expense for the Indians, disposed of.

"Clear out," exclaimed O'Rafferty, who had been holding his watch in his hand to time them, "and strike up a merry tune."

The musicians returned to their places.

Mrs. Travers had missed the music, but being told the men had gone to obtain some refreshment, thought the opportunity a good one to lead the Indian guests to supper.

"Come, prince," she said, "just as the band returned, you will see that I have done my best to give you a repast of oriental magnificence."

The Indians followed her to the pavilion.

What was their horror to see nothing but empty dishes and dirty plates.

Mrs. Travers uttered a scream of dismay.

"Who has done this?" she demanded.

The servants could give her no information. Prince Chatnagoweie accepted her excuses coolly.

He had been nearly killed by a cow, blinded by red pepper, inconvenienced by jalap in his macaroons, and finally there was no supper.

He pleaded the lateness of the hour, and ordered his carriage.

In vain Mrs. Travers begged him not to rob her party at so early an hour of its most distinguished guest.

The prince was inflexible, and departed.

Mrs. Travers could have cried with vexation.

Jack had gone back to the ball-room, and was talking to Emily, when a footman informed him that his mistress wanted to see him.

She held a card in her hand, and said:

"A gentleman, whom I do not know, but who says he is a friend of yours, has arrived; do you know him?"

Jack looked at the card and read:

"Mr. Kemp!"

"Oh, yes, I know him," replied Jack, "but I give him no authority to come here."

"It does not matter. I am at all times pleased to see any friends of yours," replied Mrs. Travers, with a smile. "I cannot talk to him, though, for I am nearly heart-broken at all the disasters which have befallen me to-day."

"My Indians have gone away huffed; my cow was a failure; my dear fish are dead. Some enemy must have conspired against me. Go and welcome your friend and leave me to my griefs."

Jack expressed his thanks, and went to the door, where Kemp was standing in evening dress.

"How dare you make use of my name and come here?" asked Jack, angrily.

"I asked your servant where you had gone; he told me, and as I thought I should enjoy myself at this ball, I hired a trap and came over," replied Kemp.

"It's no use your impudence," replied Jack.

"Isn't it?" answered Kemp, with a laugh.

"I've a good mind to kick you out," replied Jack, turning away.

Kemp followed him, and said:

"I am going to that pretty girl in pink. Who is she?"

"That's Emily."

"Who's she, may I ask?"

"The girl I'm engaged to," replied Jack, sadly.

"All right. I'll see if I can't cut you out in

that quarter," said Kemp, with an aggravating smile. "I've got a winning way with the girls; they all like me."

"Don't go too far," remarked Jack, his eyes sparkling with suppressed rage.

Kemp hummed an air carelessly, and walked over to Emily, who was talking to old Major Chutney.

Jack remained by himself, and felt as if he could have flown at Kemp then and there and strangled the life out of him.

"They did it well, the rogues," Major Chutney was saying. "I quite took them to be what they said they were—railway surveyors. Ah, the rascals, they quite upset my wife and I for a few days; indeed, Mrs. Major Chutney wasn't herself for a week. But I forgave them for it. Ha! ha!"

Addressing himself to Emily, Kemp said:

"Pardon my introducing myself to you, Miss Emily. I am a college friend of Harkaway's and he is too lazy to-night to do the amiable."

Emily bowed stiffly.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"A dance, if you have one to spare," he replied.

"I am very sorry that my card is quite full up to supper time."

"And after?"

"And even then, unless you have the patience to wait until the small hours of the morning."

She turned away, and again talked to Major Chutney, leaving Kemp looking very foolish.

He was cross and angry, and went back to Jack, who was biting his lips.

"Your sweetheart is not very amiable," he remarked. "She would not dance with me."

"I don't blame her," replied Jack. "Girls don't like being taken by storm."

Seeing O'Rafferty at the other end of the room, Jack went to him, with a ray of hope in his heart.

Knowing his friend's talent for joking, he fancied he would help him to get rid of Kemp, the sight of whom at the ball made him feel wretched.

"Ah, my dear boy," said O'Rafferty, "I am like Hercules resting after his labors."

"Come and have a glass of cham., and you will feel like a giant refreshed. I want to talk to you," exclaimed Jack.

They went to the refreshment room, and, sitting down, asked for a bottle of champagne.

"You know Kemp," continued Jack. "He is here, and has introduced himself through my name. I hate him. Can't you get rid of him in a pleasant way?"

"Let me see," said O'Rafferty. "My fertile brain is a little exhausted."

He thought a moment, and then suddenly clapped his hands together.

"Be jabers! I have it," he cried. "My cousin's wart has done it."

"What?" asked Jack, laughing.

"Mrs. Travers has a wart on her cheek," continued O'Rafferty, "and out of that wart grow three long hairs."

"I never saw them."

"No, because she uses a strong depilatory to remove them. It's a frightfully strong mixture of burning chemical stuff, and when rubbed on hair, makes it come off quickly. That's the idea. Let us go and make everything ready for the victim. James!"

The footman happened to be in the refreshment room.

"Here, sir," he said, hearing his name.

"Go and get a basin full of flour from the cook," exclaimed O'Rafferty.

"Yes, sir."

"And go to my cousin's bed-room—that's Mrs. Travers, you know—and bring me her bottle of depilatory. You will see it marked, 'The Depilatory, or Patent Hair Destroyer. Poison.' Don't drink it."

"Not me, sir," replied James, going away to execute these orders.

When he returned, O'Rafferty led the way to the little bed-room opening on the stairs.

"This is my nest for to-night. Scrape off

the label from the bottle. Quick!" said the Irishman.

Jack did so with the aid of a knife.

"Now it's scented hair oil. Do you see?"

"Not yet," replied Jack.

"Wasn't it a lucky thing I thought of my cousin's wart? We'll soon settle Kemp's hash. Oh, ballysmashum! bothero! Won't he kick up an illigant shindy?" exclaimed O'Rafferty, dancing with glee at the prospect of what he was going to do.

The hair destroyer was placed on the table, a candle lighted, and the confederates went out.

"You go and bring the victim out here. Let him stand on the stairs. Keep the martyr in conversation until I give an Irish war-whoop," said O'Rafferty.

Jack nodded, and going into the ball-room, found Kemp talking to Emily.

She smiled as Jack came up, and said:

"Really, this gentleman is extremely persevering; he is boring me to death to dance with him."

"Give him one dance presently, Emily," replied Jack, with a wink.

"If you wish it, I will. Mr. Kemp, I shall be at your service after the 'Lancers,' which are just about to begin," said Emily.

"Thanks, very much," answered Kemp.

He took Jack's arm, and the latter led him towards the stairs.

"That's what I call civil of you," said Kemp.

"You're a good slave, and beginning to know your work."

Jack flushed at this insolence.

"Don't thank me like that," he said, fiercely, stopping on the stairs.

Suddenly a mass of flour fell down upon Kemp's head and shoulders, nearly blinding him.

"Hurrah for ould Erin! chu-r-rup!" was heard up above.

"What the deuce is that?" cried Kemp, furiously.

The next moment O'Rafferty was patting his head and rubbing the flour in, on the pretense of rubbing it off.

"My dear boy," he said, "I am very sorry, but the basin dropped out of me hand. It's only flour, and the ladies wanted it to whiten their pretty faces."

Getting his eye open, he said:

"I wish to goodness you wouldn't play your infernal tricks upon me."

"By the soul of me grandmother, and that's an oath, it was an accident," said O'Rafferty. "Come to me room, me dear boy, and wash it off."

Kemp suffered himself to be led away to the little room on the stairs.

Here the depilatory or hair destroyer was awaiting him.

O'Rafferty's face sparkled at the expectation of what was coming.

As for Jack, he returned to the ball-room, determined to leave the Irishman to his own devices.

He felt sure that the intended Kemp was in good hands.

Looking the victim of the practical joke into the little bed-room opening from the stair-case, O'Rafferty pretended to be very much vexed at what had happened.

"It's so confounded awkward," he said, "to have one's self covered with dear—nasty stuff, flour."

"Very," answered the victim.

"But we will soon have it off," continued the volatile Irishman. "Put your head in the basin. So; I will wash your hair with hot water, and here is some stuff my cousin, Mrs. Travers's maid brought me, which is good for one's thatch. It's some sort of oil. Will you have a little on?"

"If you please," replied Kemp.

He held his head in a proper position, and O'Rafferty began to scrub away at his head with a nail brush.

"Shish, shish," he muttered, as if he was grooming a horse.

"I say," cried Kemp, suddenly.

"What, my boy?" asked O'Rafferty.

"Isn't that oil stuff rather hot?"

"It can't be, oil's cooling. It's the water, me innocent. We'll turn you out beautiful for ever. Madame Rachel's a fool to me. S-shish, s-shish."

The process went on for another minute, and Kemp's hair began to come off in bunches under the influence of the hair destroyer.

Already he was bald in several places.

"Confound it, how my head smarta," said Kemp.

"Stings, does it? That's the flour. Perhaps it was adulterated with Cayenne pepper; the thieves of bakers will do anything in these days."

"I'm extremely obliged to you for your kindness," said Kemp. "But if you'll give me a towel, I'll have a rub."

Pouring the rest of the depilatory over the victim's head, O'Rafferty handed him a towel.

With this Kemp rubbed his hair vigorously.

He looked like a mangy dog, with bare patches all over his head.

After the final rubbing with the towel there was scarcely a hair left.

He went to the glass to look at himself, and uttered a howl of dismay mingled with anger.

"God bless me," he exclaimed, "what's the matter with me?"

"Eh?" said O'Rafferty, as if he did not understand him.

"Where's my hair?"

"By the powers!" said O'Rafferty, "it's as bald as a coot you are. What could have done that? The oil must have been the thing my cousin keeps—a depilatory—to take the hairs off her mole, and they have brought me the wrong stuff. Be jabers! it's lucky you used it instead of me."

"What am I to do?" asked Kemp, blankly.

"Wigs are cheap."

"Wigs! I wear a wig! It's my opinion, sir, you have done this on purpose."

O'Rafferty placed his hand on his heart.

"On the honor of an Irishman"—he began.

"You've got no honor, sir," shrieked Kemp.

"On the word of an O'Rafferty, my dear boy—"

"You're a scoundrel and I'll be revenged," hounded Kemp.

"This is bad business, and a worse return for my kindness, Mr. Kemp; I'm done with ye," answered O'Rafferty with dignity.

"How far me, ye mean. What can I look like without any hair on my head?"

O'Rafferty hummed a Negro melody, and sang:

"For he had no wool on the top of his head, in the place where the wool ought to grow. It's an'gry, me boy, to have no wool, but a bald head's a fine thing on a summer's day for the flies to settle on."

"I'll have my revenge," cried Kemp, fiercely.

He seized the can of oil, and rushed upon O'Rafferty, who was laughing with laughter, and who cleverly dodged a blow that was aimed at him.

Then the Irishman ran on to the stairs, followed by Kemp, who was soon stopped by a crowd of people going down to supper.

Seeing a sealskin cap hanging on a peg, he put it on, and thus hid his original appearance.

By this time O'Rafferty had disappeared.

Pushing his way into the supper room, which was crowded, Kemp sat down, thinking he would catch his ruffled feathers with a glass of champagne and the help of a chicken.

Though his head was smarting, and he remembered very well he had lost his hair, he forgot that he had a sealskin cap on.

To wear a cap in a supper room, before nearly a hundred guests, was a gross breach of decorum.

Loud murmurs arose.

A gentleman spoke to Mrs. Travers, and Mrs. Travers spoke to the gentleman.

The gentleman rose and stepped back into the hall.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said.

Kemp had just finished a tumbler of cham-

pagne, and had helped himself to half a chicken.

"There is a person in this room," continued the speaker, "who has dared to sit down to table, in the presence of ladies, with a sealskin cap on."

"Hear! hear!" cried the company.

"I request that person to remove the obnoxious cap," concluded the speaker.

Kemp went on eating his chicken, not thinking for a moment that he was the subject under discussion.

The murmurs increased.

It was clear that a storm of indignation was brewing.

"Sir," thundered the speaker, "I call upon you to take off your cap."

A footman touched Kemp on the shoulder.

"What is it?" asked Kemp; "lobster salad? Very good. Give me some on a clean plate."

"Caps isn't allowed in perlitte society," answered the footman, "and you've got to remove yours."

"I can't," replied Kemp.

"He says he can't," said several voices.

"Why not," demanded the speaker.

"Because I'm bald," answered Kemp, glaring fiercely around him.

There was visible agitation among the ladies.

"Footman," said Mrs. Travers' friend, "take off that man's cap, and turn him out."

In an instant the cap was removed.

Kemp sprang to his feet, and shaking his fist in the footman's face, threatened to strike him.

"You base-born scoundrel!" he exclaimed; "how dare you lay your hands on a gentleman? Take that, and that, and that, and that!"

The footman, hit heavily by Kemp, rolled over on a side table and brought down a pile of plates with a crash.

All the ladies screamed loudly.

Mrs. Travers nearly fainted, and the gentlemen rushed towards Kemp.

"Turn him out! Kick him out!" they all cried. "Show him the door! Out with him! Out with him!"

Bereft of his sealskin cap, and looking as wild as a madman with his head shaved, the wretched Kemp knocked down another footman or two, and dashed away like a hare hunted by the hounds.

Gaining the passage, he darted upstairs.

The deserted ball-room was no safe refuge, so he made his way to the conservatory, which was pleasantly filled with orange trees and exotic shrubs, mixed with flowers, which shed a delicious fragrance around.

Here he thought he could find refuge, and consider what was best for him to do.

An odious practical joke had been played upon him.

Of this he felt certain, as O'Rafferty must have known what he was doing when he put the depilatory upon his head.

He had been chased from the supper-room, and would certainly be kicked out of the house if anyone found him after supper was over.

What to do for the best he knew not, and the wretched man was nearly distracted.

Suddenly he stopped in the center of a perfumed grove of orange and lemon trees, for he heard voices near him.

Surely he could not be deceived.

The voices were those of Harkaway, Emily, and O'Rafferty.

Peering carefully through the scented branches, he saw the three standing together, preferring an agreeable chat in the conservatory to the noise and bustle of the supper-room, where they could descend when the crash was over, and the appetites of some of the guests were satisfied.

Kemp listened.

Something told him that he was the subject of their conversation.

"You should have seen him, my dear," said O'Rafferty. "He was as bald as St. Patrick, and as wild as a Kilkenny cat. 'Sir,' says he, 'you're a scoundrel.' By the word of an O'Rafferty and the honor of an Irishman," says I, when he stopped me, and says: 'I've lost my hair.' Of course he had. I promised Jack

to serve him out, and when I see him in Oxford I'll ask him the price of wigs."

"So," thought Kemp, "I have to thank Master Harkaway for this. Very well; my time will come."

"I think," said Emily, "that Mr. Kemp is a bad man, because he was the friend and associate of Hunston and that poor fellow Davis who is dead."

"Bad!" replied Jack, almost fiercely. "That Kemp is the biggest scoundrel that ever walked the earth. He'd rob a church."

"Or take the sugar out of a canary bird's cage," suggested Emily.

"Or the pence out of a blind man's hat," replied O'Rafferty.

They all laughed.

Kemp's face became demoniac in its expression.

"I'll give you something to cry about presently," he muttered between his clinched teeth, and shaking his fist in their direction. "You don't chaff me for nothing, and make merry at my expense."

"It's an infernal shame," continued Jack, "that such a fellow should be allowed to remain at the University."

"But, Jack, dear," said Emily, mildly, "there must be a black sheep in every flock. Must there not?"

"I don't see the necessity," answered Jack. "and if I were the shepherd of the flock, I would jolly soon kick the sheep out."

"Leave him to me," said O'Rafferty; "I have a talent for settling unpleasant people. Will you deliver Kemp over to the tormentor—that's me?"

"And that's not grammar," put in Emily, with a smile.

"Shall I say that's I, or that's myself, sweetest of thy lovely sex?" answered O'Rafferty; adding, "the fact is I am one of those men who can rise superior to grammar."

"Never mind Emily," said Jack. "She likes to nag a little occasionally. I deliver Kemp over to you. Show him no mercy."

"Not a ha'porth, me boy. He's a gone coon, and has seen his last gum tree," replied O'Rafferty.

Kemp went down on his hands and knees, and crawled between the large tubs that held the branching trees.

He approached Emily, who was standing with her back to him, in her muslin ball dress, looking very gauzy and fairy-like.

Drawing a wax match from his pocket, he struck it gently, and held it under her skirt, lighting the inflammable material in three places.

Then he retired in the same snake-like manner.

"Ha, ha!" he cried to himself; "we shall see who will laugh the longest—Harkaway and his friends, or I."

All at once it became apparent that a thick smoke was arising from that part of the conservatory where the three friends were standing. "There is a smell of burning," said Jack, looking round uneasily.

"I hope the house is not on fire," remarked Emily; adding, "Is this one of your tricks, Mr. O'Rafferty?"

"No, indeed," he replied. "There is one of those things I never play with."

"Oh?" exclaimed Emily, all at once; "it is behind me. I am quite hot. Dear Jack, please see if there is anything the matter with me."

In a moment Jack was at work.

A quick glance in her direction showed that her dress was in flames.

It was horrible to think that his daughter Emily might be burned to death.

With the rapidity of lightning, he took off his coat, and forcing her violently back, made her lie upon her back, and threw the coat over her.

This would not have been so if he had not O'Rafferty seen a large tub of water standing close by.

Taking it in his arms, he stepped forward as

wright to the spot where she was lying, and cast it over her in a stream.

"Oh, help, help! for the love of Heaven! I am burning—burning!" she cried, piteously.

Then she lost her senses.

The water, however, effectually extinguished the fire, as there were several gallons inside, and she was completely deluged.

"Roll her over; serve her all over alike," said O'Rafferty. "That's your sort, man. She's out. Gad! I ought to have been a fireman. Bravo!"

Jack rolled her in the water, which was streaming all over the floor, and had the satisfaction of seeing that she was in no further danger.

He fell on his knees, and supported her loved head on his arm.

"God be thanked for his mercy," he murmured, raising his eyes piously to the star-studded firmament, which was visible through the glass roof of the conservatory.

O'Rafferty was not a man of very strong religious tendencies, but he answered fervently: "Amen!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DAY'S SHOOTING.

KEMP did not dare to stay to see the result of his villainous work.

He had hoped that he had burned Emily to death, because he would thereby inflict pain upon Harkaway.

If he lingered in the ball-room he would become the object of suspicion, so he ran into the hall, put on the first hat and coat he could find, and went to the stables to find his coachman, which having done, he got into his conveyance and was driven back to college.

Emily was carried by Jack and O'Rafferty to her bed-room, where the lady's maid, assisted by Miss Chutney, who was summoned privately so as not to alarm Mrs. Travers and disturb the party, undressed her and put her to bed.

Very anxiously did Jack wait till Miss Chutney came in.

"Is she hurt?" he asked eagerly.

"Not much," was the reply. "A little scorched, but nothing serious. We have applied flour and water to allay the pain. She's a little hysterical and nervous through the shock, but there is nothing to fear. How did it happen?"

"That is just what I cannot make out," answered Jack. "There was no light anywhere near her; unless she trod upon a match which had been carelessly dropped, I can't think how it came about."

Slipping away from the ball-room, which was then crowded with guests, supper being over, Jack went to Emily's room.

"Hush, sir," said the maid, "she is asleep."

Jack sat down by the bedside, watched over her till nearly morning, when he retired to rest, and slept like a top till O'Rafferty awoke him in the morning.

"Arise, ye, then, my merry, merry men, it is our breakfast-time," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "We are going out shooting, you and I. With great perseverance I have discovered a couple of pots of ancient make, which seem warranted to burst on very slight provocation."

Jack smiled.

"I will go with you if Emily is better," replied Jack.

The young lady in question is at the present moment presiding at the tea-urn, and begs me to say that, for a little pain, she is all right, and that not having seriously affected her nervous system.

"That is good news. Just slope, will you, while I get into the bath. I shall be down directly; I say, tell Henry not to make my coffee too sweet," said Jack.

He was delighted to find that Emily was not so hurt, and gladly fell in with O'Rafferty's proposition to start a shooting party.

Mrs. Travers had a small estate, upon which there was not much game, as she did not go to the expense of a keeper.

The Irishman cared very little on whose land he went upon, so long as he got a good shot at something.

Armed with rusty, but still serviceable guns, and well supplied with powder and shot, the two started on their expedition.

"I am afraid we shall come to grief," remarked Jack.

"If I see only the tip of a rabbit's ear, or a feather of a pheasant's tail, I am, in the word of the poet, 'on it like a grub,' or, as the vulgar would observe, 'like the bee on the honeysuckle,'" said O'Rafferty.

They walked several miles without seeing anything, and both the young men began to find the amusement rather slow.

"I should like to get a shot at something, hang me if I shouldn't," said Jack.

"Ditto in this direction," answered O'Rafferty. "Whist! me boy, look at those ducks in that pond; a couple of dozen beautiful Aylesburys, I'll swear."

"Yes," said Jack, looking in the direction indicated, "and there is the owner watching them."

A stout, sleepy-looking man was leaning against some railings round a pond, upon whose placid surface a score of ducks disported themselves.

"Morning, governor," said O'Rafferty.

"Same to you, young master," was the reply.

"Those are fine ducks."

"They be all that."

"What will you let me have a shot at them for? Will you give me ten for a pound?"

"Gi'e me the p'und," said the man.

O'Rafferty handed him a golden sovereign.

"There's the bullion!" he exclaimed. "Now then, I may blaze away till all's blue, and have what I kill."

"I'll have the same," said Jack. "Ten shots for a quid. Catch, master."

He tossed them over to the man, who, with a sly chuckle, dropped them into his pocket, and walked away.

"Turn and turn," continued Jack. "You begin, and I'll have second fire."

"Here goes, me boy; death to ducks is my motto, when I go out for a day's shooting."

Bang, bang, went the guns.

Quack, quack! screeched the ducks, whose bodies soon began to float on the surface of the pond.

"That's my last," said O'Rafferty at length, "and I've potted six, while only five have fallen victims to your weapon of destruction. This is what I call sport."

"Let's have another sov's worth," replied Jack.

"I'm game if you are. 'Here, master,' exclaimed O'Rafferty, addressing the farmer-looking man, who was a hundred yards off.

"What be it now?" was the answer.

"May we have another ten shots at those ducks?"

"You may have as many shots as you please, young gentlemen," said the man.

"Them dooks don't belong to me. I am a stranger in these parts; Abingdon's my whoam. Here comes the farmer they belongs to, and perhaps he'll have something to say to you. He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You old villain!" exclaimed O'Rafferty. "By the bones of my grandmother—and that's an oath—I should like to give you something to remember me by."

"Neatly sold, by Jove!" said Jack, biting his lips. "There is two quids more, and the prospect of a row into the bargain. Look at the farmer coming this way: he looks awfully riled."

"Let's look it," observed O'Rafferty.

"Stop and tell the truth," replied Jack.

"Where is the man we gave the money to? The old beast has sloped off somewhere. Hang the old cheat!"

Suddenly the farmer began to run, and brandishing a large stick, cried to a big grey dog, half bull, half mastiff, which Jack perceived for the first time.

"He on to 'em, lad!" Leo, Leo, Gripper.

He on, Grip lad. Stick to 'em, stick to 'em."

"I don't like the look of that dog, Harkaway," said O'Rafferty, nervously.

"Nor I. Is your gun loaded?"

"No."

"Nor mine, worse luck, or I'd shoot him," said Jack.

"Figuratively, we are up a tree; let us get up one literally. See the larch overhanging the water, with a sloping trunk?"

"Yes."

"Up you go, then, after me, like greased lightning. Quick, me boy, and we'll have some sport with the farmer. Mind your gun; don't leave that."

O'Rafferty led the way up the tree, which, as it was half down and leaning a good deal over the water was not difficult to climb.

He was followed by Harkaway, and soon the confederates were safely ensconced in its leafless branches, with the water beneath them, the sky overhead, and in front a snarling dog, with his bare gums showing his white teeth, and a corpulent farmer, wild with rage, shaking a big thick stick, as if he was paid so much for doing it by the hour.

"Morning, farmer. Cold, isn't it?" said Jack, chaffingly.

"I'll make it warm for you, before I've done with you," answered the farmer. "What do you mean by shooting my ducks?"

"We paid a man two pounds to let us shoot at them. He said they were his."

"Gammon. I don't see no man; you're a couple of young blackguards, that's what you are."

"Me good sir!" exclaimed O'Rafferty, "are you aware that you are speaking to the Prime Minister of England and the Lord Chamberlain?"

"You are very exalted," replied the farmer. "I'll have you out of that. It's time the old tree came down, and a ducking wouldn't hurt you. I'll leave the dog to mind you while I go for a man and an axe. Shoot my ducks, will you? I'll duck you."

Shaking his stick again, the farmer said to his dog:

"Mind un, Grip; mind un, lad," and walked off as quickly as he could.

The dog planted himself at the foot of the tree, and looked savagely at the captives.

"It's a nice dog, but I'm afraid he must go where the good niggers go," exclaimed O'Rafferty, coolly.

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why, he must be potted. While the farmer is absent we can escape. Hand up the powder and shot."

Jack did so, and O'Rafferty loaded his gun.

Then he took deliberate aim at the faithful animal, who rolled over dead, being shot through the heart.

"Now's your time—quick!" said the Irish man. "Away wid ye, me boy!"

He and Jack were soon in full flight across the country; nor did they stop until they had placed a couple of miles at least between them and the fatal pond.

All at once they espied a pretty-looking little house, half hidden amongst some trees, and they halted.

"Do you see that thing in the hedge?" cried O'Rafferty.

Jack looked, and saw something small and brown dodging about in the hedge bottom.

"It looks like a pig," he replied.

"Whatever it is, I mean to have a shot at it," answered the Irishman.

Raising his gun to his shoulder, he fired.

There was a faint shriek, which evidently came from a human voice, and all was still.

"Dead as mutton, I'll lay odds," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "Let us go and examine our game."

Scarcely knowing why, Jack reluctantly advanced, feeling as if O'Rafferty's balls contained shooting had this time brought them into trouble.

Advancing a few yards farther, they gasped.

through a gap in the hedge, and O'Rafferty ran forward, crying:

"There it is!"

"What is it?" inquired Jack.

O'Rafferty made no answer.

He placed the butt of his gun on the ground, and leaned pensively on the muzzle while he regarded the object which was stretched out in all the silence of death before him.

It was a child, nearly black, of Indian birth.

"This is manslaughter," said O'Rafferty. "But who the deuce expected to see black children running about in this country?"

"I'll tell you what," cried Jack, taking the little creature in his arms; "it's one of Mole's children. He lives somewhere about here. Good God! what have you done?"

"Killed the youngster, sure enough. I'm very sorry for it, but how could I know?"

"Mole won't be sorry."

"Who is this Mole?" asked O'Rafferty.

In a few words Jack told him all about Mr. Mole and his marriage in Limbi with Ambonia, their subsequent meeting in Oxford, and Mole's flight from the university to study science and build a balloon.

"A balloon?" said O'Rafferty. "Then the round thing is it, I expect."

Jack looked to the right, and saw a huge balloon, inflated with gas, having a car attached which was nearly completed.

The machine was held to the earth by three strong ropes.

Almost at the same moment, a tall lady dressed in white, but having black hands and feet, emerged from the house and directed her steps toward the intruders.

"That's Ambonia," said Jack, "and she is a tigress. Look out for squalls."

O'Rafferty stood irresolute, not knowing what to do, and then placed the child in the car of the balloon.

CHAPTER XXX.

IT IS ALL UP WITH MRS. MOLE.

"You talk to her; she talks a little English," said Jack. "while I go and see old Mole."

"Very well," said O'Rafferty.

O'Rafferty carelessly held the gun in the hollow of his arm, and awaited the approach of Ambonia.

"Ha!" she exclaimed; "why for you come peach on my husband's ground?"

"Madam," replied O'Rafferty, with a low bow, "I assure you that nothing was further from my mind than poaching."

"But you got shoot gun. I hear it shoot—bang! What you kill?"

O'Rafferty did not answer.

She passed him, pushing him rudely on one side.

"My very dear madam," said O'Rafferty, "what can I say to appease your wrath? Listen to me."

Ambonia had concluded to stand under her apron.

Withdrawing it, she displayed a revolver with five chambers.

"This pistol," Ambonia said, "it loaded. I can with pistol kill. You mind; look out there; let me—"

O'Rafferty fell back.

Ambonia got up the pair of steps which gave admittance to the car, the latter being about six feet from the ground.

Suddenly she uttered a piercing shriek.

She had discovered the body of her child.

For a moment she was overwhelmed with grief, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the little black child, shed bitter tears.

Then thinking of the murderer, for such he was in reality, she said to herself in her own language:

"Revenge first, grief afterwards."

She looked around for O'Rafferty, and perceiving a pistol at his side, said:

"I will shoot you for him, but you must not shoot at me first, and I will not shoot at you until you have shot at me first."

The aim was a bad one, and the bullet missed its mark.

Again she fired.

O'Rafferty sprang from side to side like an harlequin in a pantomime.

"Och, by the powers!" he muttered, "she will do me an injury. It's kilt entirely I am, if the saints don't interfere."

A third shot whistled harmlessly past his left ear.

It made a sort of noise he did not like.

"You kill my child. I kill you," shouted Ambonia, covering him again.

O'Rafferty saw an ax lying on the ground, which had been used by workmen in constructing a still unfinished car of the balloon.

Seizing it, he dealt a blow at one of the ropes, and severed it.

The balloon swung over on one side.

Rushing to another rope, he cut that.

Bang! slish!

A fourth bullet went through the crown of his felt hat.

"Fiends take the woman!" he cried, nervously. "That's a near shave, and ten and sixpence worth of good felt spoilt."

The balloon now inclined at an angle of thirty degrees.

Another vigorous stroke, and the third rope was cut.

The vast machine slowly righted itself, and began to ascend toward the sky, bearing a little southeast before the cold wind.

"Help, Isaac, help!" shouted Mrs. Mole, discharging the last barrel of the revolver with the same bad success, and then throwing the empty weapon at O'Rafferty, striking him on the shin, and making him howl like a banshee before death.

"Oh plague, take it!" he cried, ruefully, "she has barked my shins. What a wretch! but it's a comfort that she's going where she will be more appreciated than she is here."

"Good-day to you, marm, and a pleasant voyage."

Slowly the balloon ascended.

Ambonia's tall figure could be seen leaning over the car; she was shrieking and making furious gestures.

At this moment Mr. Mole appeared with Harkaway.

Both were open-mouthed with surprise at seeing the balloon disappear, not knowing as yet that Ambonia was in it.

"What is the meaning of this, and where is my black wife?" asked Mr. Mole.

"It's up in a balloon, my boy, with Mrs. Mole. I'm afraid," answered O'Rafferty.

"How is that?"

"She is in the balloon, which I set adrift to save myself from being shot by her revolver."

"Is it possible?"

"The child, who I also had the misfortune to injure under a mistake, is also with her."

"My dear sir," cried Mr. Mole, grasping his hand, "I beg to thank you most warmly for ridding me of— No, that is not right, I mean this is very sad. I lose my beloved wife and my poor helpless child at one fell stroke. It is a pity you did not put the other little negro in the car— No, I am wrong; I mean to say there is one left to console me, should I never see its poor mother again. I am your friend for life, my dear boy— No, I mean your enemy, for—"

"You may say what you like to O'Rafferty, sir," interrupted Jack. "We all know you must be glad to get rid of Ambonia; so what's the use of any humbug? Take us indoors and give us some champagne."

"Let me see the last of her," replied Mr. Mole. "That balloon will go up, up, up, until it is miles and miles over the earth. Mrs. Mole will float in space; let her float; let her float."

Gradually the balloon became a mere speck on the horizon.

"I'll get the sight of flying in that machine myself," said Mole, with a sigh, "and I'll be a reformer for many years. But now that Ambonia and her child are gone, I shall be a free man. I shall never see her again. I will remain in the city of Oxford, and once more devote my life to the study

of my favorite classics, and the coaching of freshmen."

"Bravo!" replied Jack. "Mole is himself again."

"Have you missed me, Harkaway?"

"We have been very dull without you, sir."

"That is pleasing. Come to my house; you shall have the glorious vintage of champagne, Mr. O'Rafferty, for you are my friend. Give me your hand, sir."

They shook hands warmly, and walked towards the house.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DAY OF ADVENTURES.

UNDER the influence of sundry bottles of champagne, which Mole had opened regardless of expense, the spirits of all three rose.

Harkaway said that he hoped Mole would not feel angry with O'Rafferty for what he had done.

"The fact is," he continued, "O'Rafferty sent your wife into the air in self-defense, as she was taking cool shots at him with a revolver."

"My dear John," replied Mr. Mole, "so far from being cross with O'Rafferty, if he will permit me to address him so familiarly—"

"Go on, sir; I feel as if I had known you all your life," put in the Irishman.

"Thank you," replied Mole; "I feel that you have done me a great service. To have lived much longer with that odious black heathen in this Christian country, would have driven me mad, and I was only trusting to the completion of my balloon."

"For what?"

"To escape in the night. She is worse than Xantippe, the famous shrew of old times. Oh! the life that woman has led me; look at my face, still disfigured from recent scratches, and if you could only see my—"

Jack coughed.

"Why do you cough, Harkaway?" asked Mr. Mole. "I was only going to say my ribs. If you could see them, you would find them black and blue, from frequent kicks and punches. Ambonia is a fiend, and after living with her, no man need fear anything worse than death."

"What will become of her?"

"If she does not let the gas out, she will attain a certain height, and then float about in space till she starves to death. If she knows how to manage the machine she may reach the shores of some foreign country. But that is doubtful. However she is gone, and I am free."

Mole's delight was intense.

It was a little unkind and unchristian, perhaps, but really some exercise ought to be made for a poor fellow, cowed down, humped, and wretched, such as Mole had become.

Ambonia had shown him no mercy.

She bullied him morning, noon, and night, and struck him whenever her own sweet will prompted her to do so.

In addition to this, she did not allow him to have any friends; and insulted everyone who came into the house, without any further provocation.

"I think I could dance," said Mole, "my heart feels so light."

"Give us a break-down, sir," exclaimed Jack.

"I will try; fill up your glasses. For let the bottle pass, and we'll drink another glass to the health of merry England," cried Mole, solemnly.

"That's right sir. You remind me of old times now," remarked Jack. "Go on, sir. Give us one of your favorite waltzes."

Mr. Mole executed a waltz dance, and as the wine had got into his head, the nature of the waltz was not very graceful.

The final result being that he fell back on the table, which tumbled down with a crash, and lay under a shower of bottles and glasses.

Picking him up, Jack said:

"Wake up, sir."

"Let me be, Harkaway, I am very happy," answered Mr. Mole, with an imbecile smile.

"We are shooting," continued Jack, "and must finish our day's sport. Will you come sir?"

"I may be a little excited, but I am not drunk, Harkaway," replied Mr. Mole. "If you ask me to join you in the chase, I reply unhesitatingly that I will do so."

"Have you got a gun?"

Mr. Mole raised himself upon his elbow.

"Certainly I have. A very formidable weapon, ancient, but still serviceable. It's of the blunderbuss order, and would kill a buffalo."

"Get it out, sir, and come along—the evenings close in soon now."

Mr. Mole rose, took a glass of brandy to steady his nerves, and attired himself for the chase with leather gaiters, a loose shooting coat, and a large muzzled gun.

Thus equipped, he left the house, saying that Mrs. Mole had gone for a trip with the eldest child in the balloon, and he did not know when she would return.

The servant did not see anything wonderful in this, as her mistress had shown herself to be very eccentric on several occasions.

Ambonia had beaten her with flat-irons and rolling-pins.

It had cost Mr. Mole several pounds to induce the servant to forego a prosecution in the police court.

Therefore the woman was no more sorry at her mistress's disappearance than Mole was himself.

The three sportsmen went out in high spirits, and walked a couple of miles talking and laughing gaily.

"Here we are at the property of Squire Western," said Mr. Mole. He's a strict preserver of game. Mind what you are about."

"That's a likely-looking wood for pheasants," said Jack.

"Cut in," said O'Rafferty. "Leave Squire Western, and his keepers to me."

Mole shrugged his shoulders.

A hare got up, O'Rafferty fired, and the animal rolled over dead.

"Home they brought the wild hare dead. First to the boy?" said O'Rafferty, picking up the spoil.

All at once a stern voice exclaimed:

"What are you doing on my ground, you fellows?"

"Squire Western, by the holy poker!" said O'Rafferty. "I'll lay six to four on it, and win the money."

A tall military-looking man, who was indeed Mr. Western, the lord of the manor, and a justice of the peace for the county, stood before them, accompanied by two keepers.

"We—we were merely taking a walk, sir," said Mr. Mole, nervously.

"Nonsense! you are trespassing and poaching. I saw one of you kill a hare; that hare belongs to me. Take it away from him, Jarvis," said the squire.

The keeper, a thick-set, burly fellow, appeared O'Rafferty, who threw the hare at him.

"Take it, if you want it. Perhaps a dinner is an object to your master!" he exclaimed.

"No insolence, fellow!" cried Mr. Western, calling:

"Jarvis!"

"Yes, sir," replied the keeper.

"Take their guns from them."

Mr. Mole was about to give up his blunderbuss, when Jack put his hand on his arm.

"I'll be hanged if we do!" he exclaimed.

"Stand back, men!"

The keeper hesitated.

"If you are Mr. Western, listen to me," he continued. "We are gentlemen from Oxford. My friend, Mr. O'Rafferty and myself are staying with Mrs. Travers, who is a neighbor of yours. The other gentleman is Mr. Mole, an Oxford fellow, who has property near here."

Mr. Western regarded them curiously.

"How am I to know this to be true?" he asked?

"Simply because I am not in the habit of telling lies," replied Jack.

"Who are you?"

"Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldate's."

"Indeed," said Mr. Western. "Pardon my rudeness, but really I have suffered so much from poachers that I am obliged to be strict. Game preserving is expensive, as, of course, you are aware; but if I had known who you were, I would have given you a day's shooting with pleasure, and put my keepers at your disposal."

"We did not know we were on your grounds," said Harkaway.

"Don't say another word. I am an old rowing man and an Oxford man, Mr. Harkaway, and I feel proud at having met such a distinguished member of my university. Who has not heard of Mr. Harkaway, of St. Aldate's, the best oar and bat of his year? Will you and your friends honor me with your company to lunch? Don't say no."

"Me dear boy," said O'Rafferty. "I never say 'no' to a good thing. Let me answer for myself and friends."

The squire smiled, and they walked on, chatting pleasantly together, the keepers being now as respectful, as they had formerly been the reverse.

A fine pheasant got up with a low whirr on the skirts of a wood, and was close to Mr. Mole.

"Shoot away, sir; it's a cock," said the squire.

"Ah, yes, I perceive," said Mr. Mole, bringing his blunderbuss to his shoulder slowly and taking deliberate aim at the trunk of a tree.

"Fire, man, alive, or you'll be too late!" continued the squire. Mr. Mole shut his eyes, put his feet firmly together and with great difficulty pulled the trigger of his antiquated fowling piece.

There was a loud explosion, and Mole fell on his back, grasping the butt of his blunderbuss, the barrel having gone in minute pieces in various directions.

"Good gracious! the gun has burst!" cried the squire. "Who let him go out with such a thing as that? Why, it must have been as old as his grandfather. Such guns haven't been used since the days of George the Third."

"Is he hurt?" asked Jack, seeing O'Rafferty run to his assistance.

A slight examination showed the Irishman that, though Mr. Mole's face was blackened, and his hands burnt a little, he had escaped without any serious injury.

The keepers who were near him had not been so lucky.

One had received a splinter in the leg, and the other was peppered about the arm with some No. 2 shot.

"He's all right," replied O'Rafferty.

"I am not all right," answered Mr. Mole, springing to his feet. "This is some diabolical plot to ruin me. I know Harkaway of old. Good-bye, gentlemen. I'm off, as I do not choose to risk my precious life in your company."

A gate leading into a small meadow was before him, and he climbed over it.

"Hi, sir! Stop!" said Harkaway. "It wasn't our fault. You shall have my gun."

Mr. Mole waved his hand carelessly, and disappeared behind a hedge.

"Where has he got to?" asked the squire. By Jove! I think that is the field the bull is in. I say Jarvis, stop that whimpering. If you have got a charge of shot in you, it won't kill you, will it?"

"No, sir," answered the keeper, making a grimace.

The gentleman will give you a five pound note, I daresay, by way of a shinplaster; will he not, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Oh, yes; undoubtedly."

"I never knew a keeper in my life who objected to a peppering if he got his fist full of gold for it," continued Squire Western, adding, "Now then, answer my question. Isn't it our bull in that field?"

"Yes, sir; and almighty savage he is too," replied Jarvis.

"Call the gentleman back, then, and look slippery, or it will be too late."

The whole party approached the gate leading to the field in which the bull was placed.

"Hi, you sir," shouted Jarvis, "mind the bull. Look out, sir."

The warning came too late.

Already the bull had seen Mole, and Mole had seen the bull.

Lashing his flanks with his tail, and uttering a deep bellowing, the bull at once gave chase.

Away went Mole with the wings of the wind, and away went the bull after him.

Fortunately for Mole, the bull was quite at the extremity of the small paddock when he sighted the intruder, who had not far to run to reach the hedge.

Here again he was at fault.

It was a thick, tall and quickset hedge, without the ghost of a gap in it.

How to get over was the question.

In vain Mole tried to climb up it.

He only scratched himself in the hopeless attempt.

Then he charged it with his back, and tried to butt his way through it with his hat.

It was utterly useless, however, to persevere.

While he was deliberating and trembling in every limb, bathed in a cold perspiration, and even shedding tears of terror, the sound of the bull's hoofs behind him, and a deep bellow, riveted him to the spot, frozen with horror.

"Harkaway has done this for me," he said to himself, with ashy lips, from which issued a faint moan.

The bull saved him the trouble of any further reflection, for, putting down his head, he very quickly lifted Mr. Mole on the top of his horns, and tossed him as easily over the hedge as if he had been a baby.

This was witnessed from the other side of the field.

O'Rafferty burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's what I call a joke," he said. "That man Mole is a gift. I can see there is lots of fun to be got out of him. Is he always like that?"

"Always," replied Jack. "Old Mole's a great lark, I can tell you."

"Don't talk, gentlemen, if you please. Skirt this field so as to avoid the bull, and let us go to your unfortunate friend. He may be seriously injured, and that, you will admit, would be no joke," exclaimed the squire.

Nothing more was said.

All hastened to the spot where Mr. Mole had disappeared, and a quick run of a few minutes brought them to the laborer's cottage, at the back of which was the hedge over which the bull had tossed him.

"There he is. Look, look!" cried Jack, "What on earth is the man doing?"

Mole was throwing his arms about wildly, hitting himself on his head and face, and stamping his feet vigorously.

"He's mad. Perhaps when the bull hit him he fell on his head," said the squire.

"No, me boy," said O'Rafferty, whose quick eye had detected the cause of his confusion.

"Can't you see the beehives?"

"The what?"

"Under the hedge there. Mole has tumbled into an apiary belonging to this cottager, and the bees are resenting the intrusion."

"So they are, by George," replied Jack.

"They'll kill him. Bees are ugly customers to tackle."

Suddenly Mole, stung to madness, went off at a run, but he had not gone far before he disappeared.

He seemed to have sunk into the bowels of the earth.

Nothing could have been stranger than the mysterious vanishing.

"Where has he gone now?" asked Jack.

O'Rafferty was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Oh, carry me out," he said, holding his sides. "Take him home, some of you, or he'll

not a gleam of light to be seen, except the silvery radiance which was afforded by the infant moon.

Disused for some years, the sand-pit in some places was filled with water, which, at the further extremity—that being the lowest part—was some yards in depth.

O'Rafferty had rolled down the shallowest part; though, had he been on the other side, he would have tumbled over a precipitous cliff into a deep lake.

A groan startled Jack.

"O'Rafferty," he cried, "are you near me?"

"I believe you, me boy," was the ready answer. "I've got a beautiful bed of sandstone, and will thank ye to lave me alone, for it's just forty winks I'm going to have, and sleep off the champagne—hic. If it hadn't been gooseberry, it wouldn't have had any effect on—hic—Dennis O'Rafferty."

"You are not hurt."

"Devil a bit—hic!"

"No bones broken," continued Jack.

"Not a rib. It was as easy going down as shelling peas, or rolling along that hill in Greenwich Park on Good Friday with a pretty girl by your side screaming with—hic—ginger beer and joy. Good-night; make yourself happy, and believe me to be, yours truly, Dennis O'Rafferty—hic?"

A loud snore, which Jack had before taken for a groan, followed this speech.

Feeling that the Irishman could not come to any harm where he was for a short time, Jack gave up the idea of trying to wake him.

"Let him sleep off the wine," he muttered.

"He can do no hurt."

At length Jack knocked his elbow against a projecting ledge in the side of the sand-pit.

"Hold hard," he said to himself.

Turning his head a little on one side, so as to see what was beyond the hedge, he held his breath.

He heard voices.

He saw a light.

True, it was only a faint glimmer, but still it was not a Jack-o'-lantern or Will-o'-the-wisp.

Sinking on his hands and knees, he crawled very gently along the damp sand for about half a dozen yards, when he perceived two men, who were talking together.

However, he lay perfectly still and listened.

"It isn't time yet," said one of the men. "It can't be more than seven o'clock, and I never cracked a crib in my life before twelve."

"Who wants to hurry?" replied the other.

"Not I. Come inside, and I'll give you a game of crib for an hour or two."

"I've got no money."

"I'll trust you. We shall get plenty of wag to-night at Squire Western's. They say his plate is worth thousands."

This remark enlightened Jack.

He had come across, accidentally, a band of men who were going to commit a burglary at the house of the hospitable squire who had entertained him and his friend but a short time before.

Though his intention was a dangerous one, he could not resist the temptation of ventriloquizing a little.

Throwing his voice into the middle of the sand-pit, he exclaimed, in a rough tone:

"You must be a couple of flats."

The men started.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "You are going to rob Squire Western, thinking his plate is gold and silver, when it's all duffing electro. Ha, ha!"

"Did you hear that, Ben Shardler?" said one of the men, nervously.

"Yes, I did, Dick Menzey," answered the other, equally alarmed.

This gave Jack a knowledge of their names, for though they spoke gently, he heard them distinctly, being close to them, while they thought him a long way off.

"It's time you were copped, Ben Shardler," he cried. "The police have been after you long enough."

"He knows my name," said Shardler.

"It's a detective," replied Menzey.

"Speak different," continued Shardler.

"What do you mean. Ackber angler?" said Menzey.

"Esyer," exclaimed Shardler.

Luckily Jack understood what they intended to do, for he had heard a dog fancier in Oxford, who knew everything and everybody, explain one day what the language of betting men and thieves was.

Men of that description have invented a language very difficult to interpret, but which is easily intelligible to those who are instructed in it.

The mode of speaking is simple enough.

The language is called back slang.

To speak it you, must take off the first letter from each word.

This is put at the end.

Then you add "er."

Sometimes "k" is added before or after a vowel, as in the case of "if," or "I," which would make "ifker" or "iker."

So that "ackber angler," is simply "back slang," and "esyer" is "yes."

With this explanation our reader will be able to follow the conversation of the two thieves.

"I mean to have you to night, all the lot of you," exclaimed Jack.

"Oder ouyer earher atther?" said Shardler; "eher eansmer oter opker oter ightner."

"Oter ifker Iker," answered Menzey.

"Who's in the cave?" asked Jack. "You'd best tell the truth."

The two men held a consultation.

Shardler said:

"Right you are. I'll settle him. Where is he?"

"Not far off," answered Menzey. "Dead men tell no tales."

"True for you, my boy," responded Shardler.

As he spoke he ran forward in the darkness, and was presently heard plunging into some water.

"Here I am. Come on," said Jack, as if he was straight in front of him.

"Help, I'm drowning," cried Shardler.

"More fool you," replied Menzey. "If you have got into the water, you must get out of it."

In a short time Shardler emerged wet and shivering.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack.

"He's there," cried Shardler. "I only wish I could swim; I'd have him."

"On'tder alkter oser oudler," cried Menzey cautiously.

"Ouyer aveher aker ryter," said Shardler.

Menzey thought he would have a try, but he took a roundabout route, and unluckily fell over Jack.

Turning round he seized him in a grip of iron.

"Omeker, oter ymer elphet," he cried.

Shardler was by his side in a moment.

Between them they overpowered Jack.

"So we have got you at last, my man," said Shardler. "You will have to come inside, and if you ever come out of that cave alive, you'll have luck on your side."

It was in vain for Jack to make further resistance, for the two men were more than a match for him.

They held him tightly, and dragged him through an opening into the cave.

The passage was long and narrow.

At length it opened into a series of sandstone caverns, in one of which he saw half a dozen men assembled.

They were smoking and drinking; some were playing cards, others talking over a great fire, the smoke of which rose in great volumes to the ceiling, and disappeared through an aperture in the sandstone.

Their seats were rudely made benches of wood, and there were two tables of unpolished deal, on which stood bottles and a jar of tobacco.

The men were ill-looking gipsies.

As Shardler and Menzey entered with their captive, they all looked up inquiringly.

"At'swer ether ameger?" asked one.

"Ewer aveher otger aker risonerper," replied Menzey.

"Alike ether aptainker," said Shardler.

One of the men went to a bed of moss and straw in a corner, and roused a man.

By the dim light of an oil lamp, which hung from the ceiling Jack perceived features which were well known to him.

"Hunston!" he involuntarily exclaimed.

The captain of the thieves was his old enemy.

Hunston was in command of the band in whose power he unhappily found himself.

"Harkaway!" replied Hunston, who was equally astonished.

Jack glanced defiantly at him.

He could now guess where Hunston had been hiding, while the Oxford police had been looking everywhere but in the right place for him.

"Isker eher loneaker?" replied Hunston.

"Esyer, aptainker," replied Menzey.

"Erewher idder ouyer indfer imher?"

"Outker ideser ether aveker."

"Indber isher armsker," said Hunston.

In a moment a thick cord was fastened round Jack's arms, and he was rendered powerless.

"What do you mean to do with me?" asked Jack.

"Kill you," replied Hunston, with a savage glance. "You have fallen into the hands of the Black Band, and they never spare their enemies."

"You cannot mean what you say," answered Jack.

"Harkaway," said Hunston, "you have been my ruin through life. I should not now be in the position I am, were it not for you, and do you think I ever forget or forgive?"

"You might at least be merciful to a man who has never intentionally done you any harm."

"Bah!" replied Hunston, "when I see you, Harkaway, I become a wild beast; I long for blood."

"I always thought you were a brute and a savage," replied Jack, coolly.

Hunston waved his one arm, and said:

"You have been the cause of all my misfortunes, and, by heaven, I will have my revenge at last. If you had not the luck of Old Nick, I should have settled accounts with you before now."

"While there is life there is hope," answered Jack, affecting a gayety he did not feel.

"Take him into the outer cave and let him lie there. Tie his legs, and shoot him if he moves," replied Hunston.

Shardler and Menzey carried Jack between them into the dark and gloomy cavern, tied his legs with a stout cord, and there left him.

"This is a pleasant lookout," said Jack to himself. "It's Pisang over again. I wonder if I'm doomed to croak this time?"

He was indeed in a desperate position.

It was no joke to be in the power of such a villain as Hunston.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN THE THIEVES' CAVE.

A SLIGHT reflection showed Jack that there was little chance of his escaping from the Black Band, of which Hunston was the captain.

If any of his members wished to show him mercy, they could not do so.

He was in possession of their secret.

The Oxford police would offer a large reward for information leading to the capture of a band of robbers who had already made themselves well known.

Many country houses had been broken into round about, and valuables to a large amount were carried off.

Owing to such of the thieves as had been seen by the terrified inmates wearing a dark-colored mask, they had acquired the name of the Black Band.

About ten o'clock, four men, armed with all the tools required by burglars, left the cave, and took the direction of Squire Western's

house, which they had resolved to rob that night.

Jack heard them go, and guessing their errand, longed for liberty, if only to put the squire on his guard.

He fell into a sort of dog-sleep at last, from which he was roused by the sound of voices.

The robbers had evidently returned from their expedition.

"Where is Red-Handed Dick?" he heard Hunston inquire.

"Shot through the heart, captain," replied the man called Menzey.

"You are sure he is dead?"

"I fired my own pistol through his head to make sure of him," replied the ruffian, with a grim smile.

"That's right. We make it a rule to leave no wounded behind, so that only a corpse should fall into the hands of the police; and corpses tell nothing. What plunder have you brought off?"

"Only a lady's jewel case; the plate was too heavy, and there was a strong resistance. All the household turned out with guns, when the infernal dogs barked and blew the gaff on us," replied Menzey.

"Yes," remarked Shardler; "if any of them had been cool enough to shoot, we shouldn't be here now."

"Poor Dick," said Hunston. "He was the prince of villains. I could have wished him a better end. Fall to, my lads; your supper is on the table, and you have earned it."

"Won't you join us, captain?"

"Not now; I'm going to speak to the prisoner," replied Hunston.

A cold ham and half-a-dozen fowls, well roasted and stuffed with sausages, flanked with good wheaten bread and a flagon of ale drawn from a cask which stood in a corner, invited the attention of the Black Band.

This good fare was the result of the robbery of the farm house the night before.

Taking up a lamp, Hunston sought Jack.

Setting the lamp down upon the ledge, so as to throw the light full upon Harkaway's face, while his own remained in the shadow, he stood with his arms folded and looked upon his prostrate enemy.

A smile of cold-blooded triumph, such as Jack often seen before on the same lips, stole over Hunston's face.

The face was altered, strangely altered of late.

Young though he was, evil passions had set their marks and lines upon its rugged exterior, and a life of dissipation and unbridled excess, had stamped him as a slave of vice.

If the face is, as Lavater says, an index or reflex of the mind, then Hunston bore his character as plainly branded on him as was Cain's.

"Fate seems to be against you, Harkaway," he said.

"Why?" asked Jack, dryly.

"Because you were thrown into my hands in a most unexpected manner. This is a pleasure I did not dream of."

"Pleasure to see me?" repeated Jack.

"Of course it is, under the circumstances. You are in my power once more. I was only waiting for this opportunity. It has come sooner than I expected, though I knew it must arrive at an early date."

"How so?"

"Through Kemp. He meant to accuse you of the robbery of the bank, and when you were convicted of the charge by the porter's evidence and sent to prison, all would be over. Kemp would have avenged poor Davis's death, and I should have wiped off old scores. "But," added Hunston, reflectively, "It is better thus. You shall die out of the way, and no one shall know what has become of you."

Jack was silent, though his eyes burned with an unnatural luster, and his parched lips quivered.

"I forgot one thing," continued Hunston. "Emily shall know that you are dead, so that she may grieve for you."

"Emily will never be yours," said Jack, goaded to desperation.

"That is more than you can tell."

"We love one another too well," answered Jack, "for one ever to forget the other. She may pine away and die."

"Or go mad," suggested Hunston, who seemed to wish to heap every conceivable torture upon the head of his enemy.

"That is not impossible; but she will never forget me."

"My good fellow," said Hunston, carelessly lighting a cigar, which was one of the best money could buy in Oxford, "you are a mere child. What is love?"

"The purest passion which can animate the human heart."

"Not at all. Do you believe a woman when she says she loves you?" asked Hunston.

"I believe Emily," continued Jack.

"For my part, if a woman says she loves me, I fancy she had not dined the day before," said Hunston with a coarse laugh. "Love is sentimental nonsense; it is an art, a science if you like, and women are its professors."

"You may sneer as long as you like," said Jack. "It is fellows like you that laugh at everything good and holy."

"Say your prayers if you want to talk," replied Hunston, impatiently. "But don't argue with me, or I will have to kick you on the head to keep you quiet."

"You are coward enough for that," retorted Jack boldly.

"Coward! Why am I a coward?"

"Ask yourself. Were you not a coward to try to stab me in the Lley Road. Was it brave to kill the poor Jew! Was it honest to rob the bank?"

"Who can prove that I did any of these things?"

"I am sure of it."

"You?" cried Hunston, contemptuously.

"Your word is not worth a button. I would not give a brass farthing for your oath. Say your prayers, I tell you."

"I have said them," answered Jack, mildly.

"When?"

"While I was lying here, and I am not ashamed to own it."

"Do you think they are answered?"

"Not yet, or I should be out of your power. But I can wait," said Jack.

"Wait!" repeated Hunston, with a blasphemous oath. "Well, yes, you may have to wait. Heaven is a long way off, you see, and you can't always expect an answer to return of post."

Jack shuddered.

Hunston's impiety was awful, and his recklessness shocked him immensely.

"There is not much difficulty in telling where you will go," he said.

"Where is that?" asked Hunston.

"To the devil's kingdom," replied Jack.

"Perhaps," said Hunston, carelessly. "I have been told before that I am going there by an express train; but it doesn't matter, I've got a return ticket."

"When you are in the midst of flames and —" began Jack.

"Stop preaching, you fool," almost screamed Hunston, as if he realized the picture Jack was trying to raise before his eyes. "Listen to me. I'm not ass enough to go in for canting humbug, if you are. Talk of yourself and leave me alone. I've got a jolly sight longer to live than you."

"I'm not dead yet," said Jack.

"Do you know how long you've got to live?" said Hunston, with a searching glance.

"An hour?" asked Jack, affecting a smile, which was far from being genuine.

"Longer than that. How long do you think you could live without food or water?"

"Perhaps eight-and-forty hours."

"Men have been known to live nine days, enduring horrible sufferings, for the want of anything to eat or drink," exclaimed Hunston.

"I doubt it," said Jack.

"You will have an opportunity of judging in your own person before long," continued Hunston.

"I?"

"Yes, you, my boy. I could kill you outright, but I want you to die a lingering and horrible death, because I hate you so."

After looking at his prisoner a minute, Hunston continued:

"Look at my armless shoulder. Who shot off my arm?"

"It was done in self-defense."

"Look at what you have made me."

"You cannot blame me. I have offered to start you in life," said Jack; "but you prefer a vagabond existence."

"Do I? Take that for your insolence," cried Hunston.

"He brutally kicked Jack in the mouth, as he lay bound on the floor, and covered his face with blood.

"Coward!" exclaimed Jack, all his old spirit arising within him. "I defy you. Kill me by inches, if you like—cut me to pieces—I will show you how a brave man can die and shame a coward."

"We shall see," answered Hunston.

Turning to the cavity which answered the purpose of a doorway from one room to the other, he exclaimed:

"Enzeymer!"

Menzey, half drunk as he was, responded to his call.

"Idder ouyer alker aptainker?" he said.

"Esyer."

"Atwheer oder ouyer antwer?"

"Etger ricksber andker ortarmer oder utsher ether risonerper inker isther aultter oder everer."

Menzey started in amazement at this order.

"Etler itker eber oneder patker oncekler On'tder oseler aker omentmer," continued Hunston.

Menzey bowed in token of obedience, and went away.

"I shall see you once more, and then we part forever," exclaimed Hunston.

Jack made no answer.

Hunston took the lamp, and joined his men in the other cave, leaving Jack alone in the dark.

No wonder that Jack's soul sank within him.

He had only too well understood the command Hunston had given to his lieutenant, Menzey.

This is what he said:

"Get bricks and mortar to shut the prisoner in this vault forever."

And then he added:

"Let it be done at once. Don't lose a moment."

Now Jack knew what he meant by a lingering death by starvation.

Hunston intended to brick up the entrance to the inner cavern in the sandstone.

This would make Harkaway a close prisoner, without any hope of escape, and he would die in the cruellest manner that the mind of man could conceive.

Shutting his eyes he tried to fancy it was all a hideous dream.

Only a short time before he had been enjoying himself with O'Rafferty at Squire Western's.

If he had been in the Malay Archipelago, he would have expected some atrocious treatment, but in England, not many miles from Oxford, the thing was incredible.

Difficult to believe as it was, Jack did not shirk the truth.

It seemed that if any assistance came to him, it must be something more than human.

CHAPTER XXXV.

O'RAFFERTY WAKES UP.

It was quite late when O'Rafferty woke up, wondering very much where he was. His head ached, and so did his limbs, from the cold, which was severe and penetrating.

A few moment's reflection brought all that had happened back to his mind, and he recollected how he had drunk too much champagne, lost his way with Jack and to wind matters up fallen down the side of the sand pit.

"If there was a way in, there must be a way out," he said to himself.

By the aid of the moon, he climbed the side, and stood on level ground again.

Thinking Jack had given him up, and gone on his way without him, he resolved to try and find the road.

This he was fortunate enough to do, and an hour's walking brought him to a second-rate inn, the door of which was open.

"Here's luck," he cried. "I shall go no further to-night."

Mrs. O'Leary, a widow, kept the inn, and was a chatty little body, not much on the wrong side of forty, and an Irishwoman, as her name signified.

O'Rafferty, as usual, had played her a few tricks, and she remembered him well as the young gentleman who was up to him "fun and divilment," as he expressed it.

"Ah, me dear Mrs. O'Leary!" he cried, as he entered the little bar parlor in which she was sitting. "It's meself that's a lucky boy this night."

"And what will yez been wanting at this time of night in a respectable house, Misther O'Rafferty?" replied the widow.

"Shure and it's the bite and the sup which you won't refuse to a poor belated cuntryman; that wouldn't be thrue to your swate nature, aroon."

"As for the pigeon-pie and the beer, you're as welcome as the flowers in May," answered the landlady.

"It's all I want, save a kiss, from those lips, which are more ravishing in their rich tints than those of Vanus herself," said O'Rafferty, gallantly.

"Go along wid your nonsense! Will you sup in the bar?"

"And where else would I sup? Is it lave your society you'd wish me to? It's hurtful to my failings, Mrs. O'Leary, to think of such a thing. Order in the dove tart, and I'll show you where an Irishman's appetite lies."

"It's ould ale your honor drinks?"

"It's the same, Mrs. O'Leary."

So he continued chatting, much to the widow's delight, who liked his compliments, and was pleased at the same time to see a countryman.

"This is what I call taking mine ease at mine inn, he cried. "It wants but a little potheen, me dear. Don't put too much sugar in it, and don't forget the lemon-peel."

"Ye'll have to make haste Mr. O'Rafferty," replied the widow. "It's gone eleven by the church clock, and it's time for all dacent people to be in bed."

Mrs. O'Leary would listen to none of his excuses, so he had to retire.

O'Rafferty slept well, and in the morning found that a dog-cart was waiting to convey him to Oxford.

O'Rafferty jumped in, whipped up his horse, and in a short time reached Oxford, where he discharged the coachman, and hurriedly made his way to his rooms in Magdalen.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CHIEF OF THE OXFORD POLICE.

HAVING put on his academical costume, O'Rafferty proceeded to Harkaway's rooms.

On the staircase he met Sir Sydney Dawson, who, forgiving the joke the Irishman had played him, asked:

"What have you done with Harkaway?"

"I! What do you mean? Is he not at home?" answered O'Rafferty.

"No. I hear that you and he went to a ball together two days ago, and he has not been seen or heard of since."

"I saw him last in a gravel-pit," said O'Rafferty. "This is serious."

In a few words he related the adventure which had befallen them, and Sir Sydney exclaimed:

"Perhaps he has been robbed and murdered. I know he has enemies."

"Who are they?"

"One fellow is called Kemp; you know him. The other is an old schoolfellow named Hunston, who has turned out very badly. Harvey

could tell you more about him than I, but unfortunately he is laid up."

"Oh, yes. Harvey is at the Jew's house! I heard of that. What would you do if you were in my place?"

"I should go to the police. Perhaps Hunston has met Harkaway. It is time this man Hunston was tracked by the authorities; there are grave suspicions about him."

While they were talking on the staircase Kemp came up.

He had bought a wig and looked like himself again, and though guessing that he had been the victim of a trick at the hands of O'Rafferty, it did not appear to suit him to take any notice of it.

"How do?" he exclaimed. "See anything of Harkaway?"

"No," replied O'Rafferty. "Perhaps you know more about him than I do. He is missing."

"Where did you leave him?" asked Kemp.

"In a pit where they had been digging sand or gravel or something."

Kemp started.

A visible pallor spread itself all over his face.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, recovering himself.

"He will turn up all right. He has lost his way that is all. I shouldn't bother about him."

"On the contrary, I shall bother," said O'Rafferty.

"In what way?"

"That's me own business, me boy."

"Do you mean to go to the police? I wouldn't if I were you. What can they do? Wait a day or two," said Kemp, in a persuasive voice.

"I think Mr. Kemp is quite right; don't do anything for a day or two," exclaimed Sir Sydney.

At the same time the baronet pressed the Irishman's elbow in a significant manner.

"Very well," replied O'Rafferty, taking the hint. "We will let the matter rest. What do you say to a stroll?"

"Which has for its object?"

"Beer," said O'Rafferty, laughing.

"Life is not all beer and skittles," as some one observed; but that is no reason why we shouldn't imbibe malt liquor on an occasion. Good-morning, Mr. Kemp."

Sir Sydney and O'Rafferty walked away, and as soon as they were out of ear-shot of Kemp, the former said:

"Let us go straight to the police station; I am convinced there is something wrong."

"Why?"

"Did you not see Kemp turn pale when you mentioned the sand-pit?"

"Yes."

"And it could not have escaped you that he was extremely anxious that we should not say anything to the police about Harkaway's mysterious disappearance."

"Be jabers, you're right," exclaimed O'Rafferty. "It's as plain as the cave of Fingal."

They walked at once to the police station, where they found Mr. Manisty, chief of Oxford police.

He was a very intelligent officer and received them courteously.

O'Rafferty told his story, and added that he should not have thought so much of Harkaway's absence had he not heard that he had enemies within and without the university.

"I am perfectly well aware of the fact," answered the chief.

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes. There are few things that happen at Oxford or in the country in which I do not interest myself personally."

"What do you suspect?" asked O'Rafferty.

"That is my business, sir," replied Manisty.

"Excuse my abruptness, but I have made it a rule always to ask questions, and never to answer them if I can help it. That is my idea of detective science."

"Do you know Hunston?" asked Sir Sydney.

"I should be very glad to put my hand on him at this moment," answered the chief of

police. "I have been occupied for some time in making a chain of evidence. Whether it will ever come to anything time will show; and now, sir, may I ask you a question or two."

"Fire away, me boy," answered O'Rafferty.

"When you were near the sand-pit, the locality of which I know pretty well, did you remark anything?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"Harkaway said that he saw a lantern moving about in the pit. By Jove! I had nearly forgotten that."

"He saw a lantern!" said Manisty. "That's quite enough for me, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that I will give you some news of Mr. Harkaway before this time to-morrow; but whether he is dead or alive depends on the mercy of Providence."

"You alarm me," replied O'Rafferty.

"I don't mind breaking through my rule of silence for once," continued the chief of police, "because you and Sir Sydney Dawson are friends of Mr. Harkaway, who is a gentleman the university is properly proud of."

"Well?" said Sir Sydney, anxiously.

"Hunston is, as I suspect, the captain of a gang of robbers, who are called the Black Band."

"All this winter they have been the terror of the country, breaking into houses and robbing travelers along the roads."

"Is such a thing possible?"

"It is a fact, and has cast a serious reproach on the Oxford police; but so clever is this man Hunston that we have not been able to capture the band, or find out where they hide."

"Are you any nearer a discovery than you were before?"

"Certainly I am."

"What has given you a clew?"

"In the first place, Mr. Harkaway's disappearance led me to suspect that Hunston had a hand in it, and your remark about a lantern in the sand-pit induces me to think I can find the robber's haunt."

"In the sand-pit?" said O'Rafferty.

"Exactly. I have played in that sand-pit when a boy, and its walls are full of very remarkable caves," replied Manisty. "How I did not think of it before, I cannot imagine. Leave it all to me, gentlemen, and I will do my best."

"Will it not be dangerous to attack the robbers in their den?" asked Sir Sydney Dawson.

"We shall go in force, and well armed."

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Name it, sir; if it is in my power, I will gladly do so," answered the chief of the police, politely.

"Allow me to accompany you. I am not afraid of fighting the ruffians, and I have such a regard for Harkaway that I should like to join in the hunt."

"By the powers!" exclaimed O'Rafferty, "ye musn't leave me out."

"Gentlemen," said the chief, "I am very sorry indeed to be obliged to refuse your request, but I cannot grant it."

"Well," replied Sir Sydney, rising, I suppose you know best. Good-afternoon, Mr. Manisty; many thanks for your obliging behavior."

"I am only doing my duty, sir," replied the chief of the police, politely opening the door for his visitors to depart.

Both O'Rafferty and Dawson were well satisfied with the result of their interview and returned to the college, hoping that they had done all they could for Harkaway's benefit.

That evening, after hall, Kemp left St. Aldate's, and taking the Ifley road, walked at a rapid pace into the country. He appeared to try and escape observation, and was hurried and nervous in his manner.

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